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BY WILL PAYNE

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THE STORY OF EVA

A Novel

BY

WILL PAYNE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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1901

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BOOK I

THE STORY OF EVA

I

At every station the thing happened over again. As the gliding elevated train drew up, there was a glimpse from the car window of a crowd of people waiting on the platform. The train stopped. The guard opened the gates. The people poured in, hurrying to get the vacant seats. So many of them — almost half, it seemed — were women; all on the way down town to begin their day's work.

It comforted Eva to think there were so many. Surely she could make her way where so many others did. She watched the faces of the women as they entered the car. Nearly all were young. Some were pretty. To her they had an effect of independence and capability, as though they knew what they were about.

But she had not eyes enough. While she wished to watch the women the train started, and the huge panorama below began marching and unrolling. From her seat by the car window she looked across an immense level reach of city landscape, thickly set with dwellings, cut by numberless thoroughfares, often broken by the greater mass of a fac-

tory or warehouse. Here and there clusters of treetops, quite bare or rustling their sere leafage of late October, screened the view. Then they crossed a street which stretched in an endless vista, like a kinetoscope picture with its swift trolley cars, jogging vans and carts, and moving human figures. Again the train wheeled her by houses so close that she could almost stretch out her hand and touch the walls. Through rear flat windows she had intimate glimpses of living-rooms with people in them. Still the train moved and the wheeling view spread out, — a great plain, without an elevation, merging finally in smoky distance, densely overgrown with habitations, giving now and then (through a window or in a street vista) glimpses of its teeming, busy life.

The train curved to the right, abruptly disclosing a new view. Eva saw towering bulks of masonry, vast, numberless, close-packed, lifting into a sullen pall of smoke. Her heart gave a start. It was so big, so formidable, so near at hand. For a moment she had a kind of fear of it.

She put her hand on Sarah's arm. "It looks awfully big," she murmured.

Little Sarah dropped the magazine which she had been reading, glanced out, then up at Eva, her pale blue eyes twinkling. "Just think of the size of your salary, if bigness scares you," she said.

Eva was still looking breathlessly from the window. There was a tension, an excitement, in her mind which made the joke vague.

The train crept over a high bridge above the

sluggish river in which many boats were tied up, and entered the big stone heart of the city. Whenever the noise of the train ceased, the roar of the thronged streets came up to them. People began leaving the car at each frequent stop. The turnings of the train increased the confusion in Eva's mind. These numberless short, canyon-like streets, that lost themselves in smoke or in a blank shining which she made out to be the lake, were all whirling in her brain. It was only when she stepped out on the platform, following Sarah, that the giddiness ceased. Going down the stairs to the street, she kept looking about eagerly, and as they walked along the broad flagging, under the shadow of the ponderous elevated structure, she glanced at the huge show windows. But her eager eyes kept searching for something else. Into which one of these immense stone piles would they go? Sarah turned toward a building, and her heart began beating up. But Sarah was only looking at the wedding stationery in the window. This was not their place.

They came out of the shadow of the elevated road. Then, at once, she saw it, — the sign, high in midair, — "Economy Publishing Company," in gigantic white letters, fringing the vast bare flank of a towering building ahead. Ah! This was it! Her nerves tingled from the shock, in which an indefinable fear blent with joyous anticipation.

She had a confused, excited perception of that high sign as a sort of focal point for all the big, spreading city. She knew the general facts about

the establishment, as that it published schoolbooks, atlases, encyclopædias, and the like, and sold them by subscription in some twenty States and Territories; that Wilber Arnold, the president, was an eminent citizen who figured at public dinners and on civic committees, and a notable philanthropist who had given six handsome drinking fountains for dogs, to be placed at crowded street corners down town. To her conception the whole establishment was elevated by Mr. Arnold's distinction and mellowed by his philanthropy, although her own prospective wage — six dollars a week — had so little savor of it. But it was not the wage. It was the foothold, the opportunity, the start, the first syllable in the word "independence."

As they entered the tunnel-like passage to the elevators in the Arnold Building, Sarah explained: "I will turn you over to Miss Whitcomb, the forewoman, you know, who 'll set you to work. The old girl hates me, so she 'll probably be nasty to you. But you must n't mind."

The little elevator man touched his hat to Sarah, and that impressed Eva anew with a sense of her friend's importance. Their swift, vertical flight brought them before a ground-glass door, which the elevator man rolled back for them, and they stepped into the establishment of the Economy Publishing Company. Eva saw at once that it was a very big place, taking in the entire top story, white-walled, pillared, and domed in the centre with a large skylight. She supposed that the row of offices across the front was sacred to the chiefs.

This red-carpeted space, inclosed by a polished railing and full of labeled desks, was evidently next in rank. Beyond, in the larger open space where the more vulgar activities of the house were carried on, she caught sight of many skirted figures busy at the tables and shelves piled with books. But Sarah was leading the way.

Over where the railing joined the wall, just off the red carpet, stood a small desk. At the desk sat a stout, elderly woman, in gold-bowed spectacles, with sparse gray hair, much frizzed. Sarah brought Eva beside the desk. "Miss Whitcomb, this is Mrs. Soden."

Miss Whitcomb tilted her large flat face far back for a focus through her spectacles, and, without any motion to Eva, looked a blank inquiry at Sarah.

"Mrs. Soden is going to work this morning," said Sarah sharply.

"Oh," said the forewoman crossly, "I thought it was a girl you were going to bring us."

"You thought wrong," said Sarah. "I explained it all to Mr. Arnold." She turned calmly away.

It was not a sisterly glance that the forewoman sent over her spectacles after the jaunty, stylishly clad little figure of the stenographer. Eva bit her lip. She supposed the forewoman, who was powerless as to Sarah, would take it out of her. She waited resignedly.

A full minute elapsed before Miss Whitcomb's cold and acrid glance returned to the novice. She

saw that this tall young woman beside her desk knew how to wait, and that she could have called herself a girl if she had chosen. There was a touch of youthful pink in her cheeks. With her splendid young figure, her handsome, good-humored blue eyes under thick brown eyebrows, the darker hair rolling and curling out from the uptilted brim of her hat, her effect was of vigorous bloom.

The forewoman seemed to forgive her a little. She took a blank card from the pigeonhole in her desk and poised her pen above it.

"Mrs." — she questioned.

"Mrs. Soden."

But the pen did not move. Eva hesitated a second. "Mrs. Eva Soden."

"Ah!" as the pen moved. "Husband dead?" This quite sociably.

A flame of red burned in the young woman's face. For a painful instant she hesitated. "I have myself to take care of," she said in a low voice.

"Not dead, then," said Miss Whitcomb conclusively. "Address?"

"I'm staying with Sa— Miss White, just now."

"Folks don't live in the city, then?"

"My father lives in Hopeville, Nebraska. I've just come from there, but I lived in Chicago a little while over a year ago."

"'M–m–m. Age?"

"Twenty-four."

The forewoman looked up over her glasses and

under her eyebrows; but the face and figure did not gainsay it, and she set down the numerals. "That 's all," she said dryly. A moment later, she looked over her glasses as though Eva's presence at the desk irritated her.

"What am I to do now?" Eva asked.

Miss Whitcomb seemed really annoyed. "Why, I supposed your friend would tell you." She looked around as though she expected to find Sarah waiting, or as though she would send for her. Eva knew this was a fiction, and that Sarah, as President Arnold's stenographer, was nearer to the throne than the forewoman. But she did not propose to start with a quarrel; and she had not sold prints and millinery to the country women in Tom Sears's store at Hopeville for nothing.

"I asked Miss White about that," she explained propitiatingly, "but she said it would be better to leave it to you because you would have charge of me, and you knew best how to instruct the new ones."

Her diplomacy had its reward in a kind of frosted amiability, which nevertheless left certain reservations. The forewoman got up. As they walked down the long room together, she explained impersonally: —

"That 's the way here. They bring a lot of raw material that has n't much good in it any way, and dump it all on me to pull into shape, and then they wonder why I can't help mistakes happening in the work. Anybody in the front office," she nodded in the direction where Sarah had disap-

peared, " gets a woman a place here, — maybe when I don't need her at all, — and then I must find something for her to do and keep her in trim. I don't see what they have women for any way. One man is better than half a dozen of these sniggering, flirting girls." Turning her head, the forewoman gave Eva a glance over her gold-bowed spectacles. " The ones that happen to be good-looking usually make the most trouble," she added. "I suppose they might get along all right, if they 'd let the fellows alone." She seemed willing to leave that slim chance of salvation to this particular handsome novice.

Miss Whitcomb led her charge to a long table against the wall at the lower end of the room. Here half a dozen young women were sorting, folding, directing circulars, catalogues, and like advertising matter. Explaining the work to Eva, the forewoman now and then took a catalogue out of the hands of one of the working-girls, and this she always did without looking at the girl or seeming to be aware of her existence, quite as though she were taking something from a machine. Eva, following the directions, kept her eyes on Miss Whitcomb, as though she too thought these human figures at the table were pieces of machinery.

For some time after she had taken a seat at the table, she went on folding the circulars and putting them in envelopes to be directed by the girl next her. Now and then she was aware of a pair of curious eyes glancing up at her from one part of the table or another.

"What a pretty hand you write," she said presently, breaking the silence which was too full of self-consciousness. She had covertly noticed this girl next her, — a slim creature, with oddly plump cheeks and soft brown eyes.

The girl looked up at her with a smile at once troubled and whimsical. "Yes; but I can't write fast enough," she said. "You 're getting 'way ahead of me. If the old cat comes back, she 'll scratch me for it."

There was a quickly suppressed burst of nervous laughter around the table. One of the girls looked behind her in a frightened way. "My! If she heard that!" she murmured with relief, and giggled and shook her head. That set the stout, dark girl at the end of the table to laughing.

"Oh, I 'll go slower then," said Eva, with good-fellowship.

"Then you 'll get scratched," her companion warned. There was fun in her brown eyes; but it seemed to imply a joking with serious subjects.

At twelve o'clock the girls began putting away their work, rising, and brushing their dresses. Eva sat watching them, good-humoredly, but not knowing exactly what to do.

"Did n't you bring your lunch?" asked the girl next her, whom they called Johnny.

"No," said Eva. "I did n't think of that."

"You can eat with me," said Johnny; and she seemed to make that, too, a sort of joke.

"Oh, with her! Listen to that!" cried the dark girl. "Hewlett will eat all her lunch. He

always does. Better take some of mine," she added, to Eva.

"Jen always brings such a lot," said Johnny; and the others laughed.

"I 'll go out for lunch to-day," said Eva.

"Maybe somebody 's going to treat her," said the dark girl. "Here comes Hewlett and that Jones. Maybe they'll treat Johnny; then you can have her lunch."

Eva saw two young men approaching. At the same time she heard Sarah calling, and saw her standing a little way up the room and beckoning.

Sarah took her to the "cafetera" in the basement of the building next door, — a very long, narrow room, with a clean look from its whitewashed walls. It was filled with bare little tables, and the patrons were served from a long counter laden with edibles. Clerks from the publishing house and from other hives were pouring into this long cellar for their lunch, eager, hurrying, chattering in little groups. Sometimes a young man and a young woman came in together, and a kind of freemasonry seemed to run among the men and women of the same hive. It was a free give and take of elbowing for the food and exchanging pleasantries. But Sarah had the effect of turning her small back upon it. At the counter, eyeing the heaps of coarser food with dyspeptic disgust, she took tea and toast. Eva got hot pork and beans and coffee.

They carried their fare to a table in the corner. Sarah took off her big hat. For a moment she

leaned her elbows wearily on the table, her delicate little hands touching her temples lightly. Her body was slight as a child's. The flaming mass of red hair above her thin, freckled face seemed a burden, an affliction, as though it burned her up. Eva knew it was one of her friend's bad days; but she attacked her own hearty fare with cheerful disregard of the qualms which made the other falter, sip, and nibble at the tea and toast.

"I must bring my lunch to-morrow," she said. "Most of the others seem to."

"Yes, some of them do," said Sarah. "But as soon as they can afford it, they go out to lunch. I would n't bring my lunch. I 'll stand treat till you get a raise. If you bring your lunch, you 'll have to eat with the others. Working with them is enough."

"But why should n't I eat with them? I 'm one of them," Eva protested.

"Oh, no, you 're not. You 'll find that out soon enough," Sarah replied with cool assurance.

"They seem nice girls," said Eva defensively.

"Yes, nice enough, — or most of them are, I suppose. It is n't that. They 're a poor lot, you 'll find. They think about as much of flirting with some of those bedraggled canvassers and packers as they do of anything else. Some of the men come over and eat out of their lunch-boxes; or, if the men are real flush, they take the girls down here and buy 'em factory pie. It 's a giddy life on the social side. But I guess you won't care much for it."

Eva knew it was Sarah's bad day, but she could not forbear saying, "I 'm no better than they are."

Sarah went on with her effect of wearied indifference. "Yes, you are ; a lot better. Most of the girls that work down here for five or six dollars a week have n't much of any brains, or much of any character. You 'll find the sisterhood business won't work when you come to know 'em. I don't mean that they 're bad. That implies character — maybe brains, too. There was a stunning black-eyed girl up there a year ago. She was a howling beauty, and she held herself well, too. You did n't catch her flirting with a canvasser in his only clean collar. Well, pretty soon she ran off with a race-track man, and now she 's in Paris. I take off my hat to her. It is n't that as to these other girls. They 're just so many poor, foolish little pegs. You stick 'em somewhere, and there they 'll stay forever, unless a man comes along to pull 'em out. Mostly they 're waiting for the man. Somebody must do it for 'em. No matter where you put 'em, their idea would be to flirt a little and giggle a little. Some of 'em like chocolate creams and some like soda water. That 's about all the difference. They don't want to work. They want to get married to a man with a lovely mustache, and have a tailor-made dress."

Eva knew her friend's nerves too well to quarrel with them. She was content to keep out of their way if she could. Sometimes that was difficult.

"I 've often wondered how that Miss Steiner

came to get in there any way," Sarah speculated idly, turning a teaspoon in her listless fingers. "With her beauty, I mean," she explained. "Her figure was as fine as yours." She turned her pale, speculative eyes to the beauty beside her.

Eva had a disagreeable premonition that Sarah was perversely minded at the moment to make her pay for the suffering nerves. She got up hastily, in some secret agitation, to forestall it. The stirring of an old question troubled her mind. She believed she had done right in leaving her husband. She could not make it seem otherwise than right. Yet there was this troubling doubt as to whether Sarah and two or three others whom she loved did not, down in their hearts, accuse her of a lightness, of a sort of wayward levity. She could not find it in her mind to tell them all the case. Worst of all, did they not possibly, in the last corner of their hearts, a little suspect her of taking the prerogative of a handsome woman to whom men were readily attracted? The question stirred in her emotion. She felt it rather than formulated it.

She looked out over the crowded cafetera. There was a check to the simple, abundant social instinct which had made the crowding and chattering of the clerks pleasantly suggestive to her when she entered the place. In a way she was still on trial.

II

They got back to the publishing house at a quarter to one. An elderly man, who had presumably come from his club, and who bowed to Sarah, was going into one of the important front offices. Three men, who rode up in the elevator car with them, earnestly talking business, went to desks behind the railing. In the larger space whither Eva went, half a dozen groups of young women were gossiping and laughing in the freedom of the noon hour. Eva thought again how big the shop was, and how many sorts of people there were in it.

In the lee of a high table, a young man with a red-barred shirt-front and a shabby-genteel look, sandy as to complexion, and with yellow curly hair, stood talking to Johnny. Eva identified him as Mr. Hewlett. As she walked past them, Johnny's black eyes looked up at her with a soft and whimsical appeal, as though she confessed the beggarliness of having a beau there among the boxes and litter.

Eva took her seat, and Jenny, the stout, dark girl, leaned against the edge of the table beside her.

"So you know Sarah White?" she said companionably.

"Oh, yes, I know her very well," said Eva.

"I guess you 're the only one of us 'hobo' girls she does know," said Jenny, without resentment.

"The what?" Eva asked.

"Don't you know? We 're the 'hobo' girls — that means tramps, you know — because we bring our lunches and don't get much pay. Well," she said, with an effect of impartiality, "I guess Sarah White is all right, too. Any way, she gives it to old Whitcomb lovely. But she don't know any of us."

Eva began to perceive the social polities of the workshop.

"I 'm going to bring my lunch to-morrow, and be a full-fledged 'hobo,' too," she said, laughing. "Maybe I can get a young man to help eat it."

"I guess you 're right there," said Jenny. "That Jones is stuck on you already. He wanted to know who you was. Maybe you noticed him, — the tall fellow, with his hair plastered down over his forehead, that came up with Hewlett when you was going out. He 's an awful fool; but he makes a good deal of money canvassing and spends it like fun, so the girls jolly him along. I 'll introduce him to you," she added generously. Evidently, it was the proffer of a disinterested friend.

Eva, smiling a little, made no reply. If she had her reluctance over the prospect of Mr. Jones's acquaintance, it was not founded upon any such sense of a nicer social selection as Sarah, for example, might have judged it by. By all her social traditions, which were almost exclusively those of

Hopeville, Nebraska, this homely and unconstrained contact of the shop was perfectly proper. If she did not wish to form acquaintances with the book agents and underlings of the shop who bestowed their attentions upon the "hobo" girls, it was not a question of the general proprieties, but of her own personal ones. It was because she felt strongly that she had definitely closed her account with the men when she left her husband. In the nature of things, her justification must lie precisely in the fact that she did not reopen the account. She wished with all her heart that Sarah and cousin Martha would understand that.

The shop began preparing for work. The other girls came back to the table. Johnny slipped over to her place. This girl's soft, dark eyes glanced at Eva with a little whimsical smiling, in which there was a certain fondness, as though they were friends already; in which, too, there subtly lingered a deep little glow of the out-at-elbows romance which she had just been renewing in the lee of the tall table.

"I saved a pickle for you, Johnny," said Jenny.

The girls began to joke her about her young man.

"Oh, say, did you see Franklin's new clothes? And his overcoat? Must have got a raise. How about it, Libbie?" They turned to a short, fair girl.

"I don't know. Ask Jenny."

"Me! My stars! I never know fellows that get raises. My fellows get fired!" said Jenny.

"Any way, I don't want to know fellows in the same business with me."

"Oh, you don't! How about" — They were talking loudly.

"Scat! The clock's struck. Here comes the cat!" Jenny warned under her breath. The talk ceased instantly. The girls fell to work under the acrid eye of the approaching forewoman.

A cold, wintry rain was falling when Eva and Sarah left the publishing house. Nevertheless, they went around through State Street to see what was left of the arches, the masts, the bunting, and illumination of the Fall Festival.

It was six o'clock when they got into the shopping district, and the great hive was emptying itself at once of all its daytime workers, pouring out endless processions of people, crossing, hurrying, jostling, huddled in their upturned coat collars, canopied under a mile of bobbing umbrellas. It looked like a universal breaking-up. The big stores and most of the little ones were alive and aglow, blazing out their electric lights into the misty night. Here and there a doorway was dark, as though it had burned itself out.

Eva, leading the way for slighter Sarah, pressed on with the stream. In one hand she held her shabby skirt, for the day's myriad trampling had left a sticky deposit over the wide stone walk. In the other she carried an umbrella. That hand was bare, the fingers reddened with the cold; but she did not mind the occasional feminine glances which took note of the bare hand and the shabby jacket

any more than she minded the occasional challenging masculine eye that turned to her pink cheeks and the fine lines of her figure. She did not mind the cold or the rain or the crowd. All three blent into that sense of happiness which was a kind of florescence of her strong and beautiful limbs. She liked her own triumphant vigor which could make a joke of the rain and crowd. She enjoyed pushing her way along.

The jumbled memories of the day in the publishing house were in her mind. She had taken her place in the rank. She felt her strength and capability. She would make her way, as she made it now along the crowded street. Her brain was aglow with the happiness of trying herself and succeeding.

They came back to Wabash Avenue. Overhead, effulgently lighted trains wheeled by. The surface of the street beneath the ponderous structure of the elevated road lay as a cave of gloom, shot at various distances by the glaring headlights of the street cars, or spectrally splotched by the green lightings from the trolley wires, and now and then pyrotechnically illuminated by a broad red blur along the ground, as the electric current was discharged from the car wheels into the rails. At the street corners the arc lamps on their high red posts burned an intense dead white, and the misty air smoked about them. Over here many of the stores were closed ; but the lank, towering side of a sky-scraper rose darkly into the rain, and sent out broadsides of light from its hundred windows.

When they got up to the elevated station, although a train had just pulled away, there was a crowd waiting for the next, which was wheeling into view down the tracks. Again there were so many women. Most of them were young; many were pretty: stenographers, saleswomen, waitresses, book-keepers, cashiers, what-not, — a contingent of a great army. It struck Eva with astonishment. What did they find to do? She knew that those immense stores on State Street were full of them. She had seen them in candy shops, in the restaurants, behind innumerable windows seated at desks and tables. They were in all the big banks, in all the numberless offices. At all the myriad cogs and joints of this huge, intricate machine of business one found these young women. Eva had long known the general fact; but now it struck her in a new way. She imagined them specifically, the pretty ones, the gentle ones, the hard ones, the reckless ones, the bright ones, the dull ones, with their need of food, clothing, warmth, sympathy.

The train turned a curve and stopped at another station, where more men and women crowded in. In the slow moment of starting, Eva glanced from the window, and State Street suddenly flashed up to her vision, — a long, incandescent valley. Arches of electric lamps spanned the street at short intervals; a mile of show windows glowed; far down, huge fantastic signs alternately flushed blood-red and faded, — all a sudden, amazing jumble of far-stretching lights under the rain; and up in midair, row after row of lighted windows in the

vast flanks of some detached sky-scrapers made burning portholes in the night. It was an abrupt, huge, inchoate expression of the piled wealth, the big, crude success, of the new city's commerce.

The immense picture glowed in Eva's mind. Its very size and brilliance comforted her. She thought, with a stir of exultation, "There is a place for me here!" These women about her had their places there. She felt for them a moment as human particles of the big machine; dimly, for a moment, she had a sense of their meetings and partings, their hopes and failures, of the attraction and clash of sexes, of the incessant human drama which these women brought into that iron world of business.

III

As soon as it was settled that Eva was coming back to Chicago, Sarah planned that they should set up their own establishment. When Eva came and was admitted temporarily into a joint occupancy of the hall bedroom in aunt Marion Thomas's small flat, Sarah began plotting the escape from her relatives' roof.

She argued passionately to Eva that, although it would hurt aunt Marion's feelings and cousin Susie's feelings, these feelings ought to be hurt; it was what they were made for.

These two frail, plain, meek kinswomen, so alike in spite of the difference in age, were Sarah's chief cross. Mrs. Thomas would accept only four dollars a week for Sarah's board and room, and only seven dollars for Sarah and Eva together. This alone put Sarah in a passion of resentment. Her income was greater than aunt Marion's and Susie's put together, and she could have endured the other things, perhaps, if she had been permitted to pay more than the lodging was worth. But when she had urged it vehemently, Mrs. Thomas's meek New England conscience backed up into a flood of tears, and Sarah flung away, towering and electric with baffled wrath.

There was an uncle Frank Thomas, and after a

lifelong series of errors, he had drifted from the women's ken, leaving them to shift for themselves. The pale, humble way in which the two women accepted this drove Sarah mad.

The two young women, coming home in high spirits over nothing, found mother and daughter sitting by the front window in the poor little flat, red-eyed and tearful. Eva went at once into the little hall bedroom, leaving Sarah with the family grief.

When Sarah came in, she shut the door carefully behind her, flung her hat and coat on the bed, and stood for a moment staring at Eva in a stony, helpless indignation.

"Oh, you 're big, Eva," she appealed; "you 're strong. Go out there and thrash 'em. Knock 'em down with a chair. Trample on 'em. Make 'em happy." The necessity of speaking low made her wrath more intense.

She stared at Eva a moment more, and sat down on the bed helplessly. "What do you think?" she asked.

"What?" said Eva, vaguely feeling the catastrophe.

"They 've heard from uncle Frank. He writes 'em to come down to God-knows-where in Kansas, where he 's got a restaurant that they can help him run by doing all the work. And they 're going. Oh, yes, they 're going. They don't want to; but they feel it their duty."

She picked up her hat, and sat thrusting the long bright pin recklessly through it in new places.

Her pale eyes were stonily set on Eva's, and her thin face was tense with angry despair.

"He 'll misuse them again. He 'll spend all the money. He 'll break their hearts over again. And they know it, if they 'd admit it; but they think it 's their duty to go." She went on thrusting with the hatpin.

"They 're awful liars, Eva. It 's part of their cowardice to be awful liars. It ain't duty at all. They 're afraid not to go; that 's what 's the matter with 'em. Their lord and master has spoken, and they 're afraid not to go. They 're women all through. They don't want to work and support themselves. They know they 're no good. They want somebody to work for 'em and take care of 'em. Even when they cry, they keep sneaking around with the hope that, after all, he 'll do it this time. They 're women all through, — women. Ain't it awful, Eva!" The whimsical, meaningless appeal some way summed up the situation. A willful note like that of a child ready to cry came in Sarah's voice. It touched her religion, which seemed to be an impassioned resentment of feminine submissiveness.

Nevertheless, aunt Marion's submission neatly opened the way for the separate establishment.

Sarah's advertisement for a large front room, in a quiet neighborhood, furnished for light housekeeping for two women, brought a deluge of answers, and between what was too dear but suitable and what was unsuitable but cheap enough, they compromised on a room that was a little too dear

and not very suitable, on the west side, near Union Park, in a decayed residence district. The street was quiet, and shaded with willow-trees. The house was one of a tall, dingy, close-packed, solemn, pathetic row. The bay windows and the long flight of stone steps leading up to the heavy, funereal front door, after a fashion long extinct, spoke of bygone respectability. The front door was in two leaves; the heavy woodwork, painted black, was now peeled and wrinkled with age. In each wing of the door there was a tall panel of frosted glass, with the design of an urn in the centre.

"We 'll call it 'Hic Jacet Villa,'" Sarah whispered, as the lean and grave landlady led them up the wide stairs.

The front room was at least large and well lighted. A chandelier, tarnished and fly-specked, many of its glass pendants missing, depended from the heavy plaster moulding in the centre of the high ceiling. This, and the large, dim mirror over the marble mantel, with its peeled, dim gilt frame, suggested a kind of ghostly gayety, to which Sarah made a bow when the landlady left them alone. The furnishings were a worn carpet, four dubious chairs, and a bed in an alcove.

Sarah bought the things, — the chintz curtain to hang before the alcove, the tiny gas stove, the few dishes and kitchen utensils. Then the landlady's amiable husband, who seemed to do nothing but sit around in his shirt-sleeves, got them a very tall wooden shoe-box, and put some shelves in it. This held the gas stove and all the kitchen things

except the dishpanful that was hidden under Sarah's small bookcase. Eva stood the tall shoe-box in the corner and arranged the dishes in it, but it was Sarah who got a breadth of yellow calico and draped the tall box funereally with it, and a tall lamp with a fat black body and a dull yellow globe which she put, urn-like, on top. Then she sat down before it in silent, inextinguishable mirth, and called it The Sarcophagus. She threatened to head her note-paper The Tomb. She called the landlady's husband The Sexton, and their street Boarding-House Row.

But they thought the Tomb an immense success. The delight of coming to their own place, where there was nobody to suggest anything, no one but themselves to be considered, was strong within them. It seemed independence.

It was after the landlady's husband had fixed the shoe-box that he sat down sociably in their best chair and took Eva into his confidence as to the ruin which had overtaken his business career in the great fire. Stroking his long gray beard and gently rocking, he dwelt complacently upon the importance and promise of that long-gone business. He seemed to have supported his self-respect on the memory of it for twenty-five years, while his solemn wife supported him otherwise.

"I s'pose I 'm old-fashioned," he said, with a benignant smile, "but I don't like to see young women out workin'. Seems to me a woman's place is at home,"

Then Eva caught an uncertain glimpse of Sarah, in the alcove, doubled up with mirth.

Despite his prejudices, the landlady's husband was very sociable. He brought the pale little woman who had an inner room up to their door, and assisted her in borrowing a drawing of tea. The little woman did light housekeeping, too, in her inner room. She had a sturdy little girl of two or three years, to whom Eva at once made love.

The young people came from a country town, for which the wife pined. The husband had been able to get nothing better than the position of timekeeper in a big foundry. Now there was a better opening, and they were about to venture upon a little flat of their own, far out on the western edge of the town, where they would see stretches of grass in summer. The little wife's voice trembled with joy as she told Eva all about it. But the sturdy little girl romped and bloomed joyously in this close air which stifled the country-bred mother. Besides this couple, there were two divinity students in the back room, who kept much to themselves. The little mother and the landlady's husband knew others in the population of the long, decayed, boarding-house street, — largely a floating population of under clerks, mechanics, stenographers, agents, canvassers, and the like, poorly paid, hopeful in proportion as it was young, and as it drew from the inexhaustible country which kept pouring its youth into the hive of the city.

The two young women, in the gayety of their independence, had their joke over everything. If

Sarah usually made the joke, Eva took her full share in the laugh. But there was one subject on which her fun went lame.

"You see, do the best we can, it will cost us seven or eight dollars a week," she said seriously. She had the little housekeeping book in her lap, and was tapping her chin thoughtfully with the pencil. "That makes three and a half or four dollars for me, and there 's sixty cents a week carfare, if I ride all the time, even if I take my lunches from here, which I ought n't to do if you don't" —

"So you can't see where your winter furs are coming in," Sarah added, her pale eyes twinkling.

"Furs! Gracious! If I had some whole stockings!" Eva bit the end of the pencil.

"That 's where you 're wrong," Sarah crowed. "Put your best foot forward. Have some style. Get the furs and never mind the stockings. You wear long skirts."

Eva laughed a little, doubtfully.

"I don't see what you want of stockings," Sarah persisted, bending forward a little, her eyes twinkling in that still mirth and still affection of hers. "You look like a tramp, now. You have n't a decent dud to your back. And you won't buy anything." The affection overflowed. "Be sensible — and good," she pleaded. "Take your money for three or four weeks and get the things you need. Then after you 've got them you can pay me along as you get a chance."

Eva glanced over at her friend. "Yes, I know,

— that 's awfully good of you, Sarah. But I can't do that. You know I could n't pay you; and I 'm going to take care of myself " —

" Or bust," Sarah put in, as she hesitated.

Then they laughed again. But the stubborn problem was not solved.

Eva saw thus early that there was not much hope in the Economy Publishing Company. Advancement came slowly. Most of the girls lived at home, and the little wage they got only " helped out." There was an endless offering of candidates of this sort, so that in giving a girl a place at six dollars a week, the house conferred a favor. Wages seemed more likely to fall than to rise. Eva thought she could do something better than to fold circulars, address envelopes, and paste things in books. She began thinking of a better job.

Meantime the imposing establishment of the Economy Publishing Company had become familiar to her. The girls had a whole world of gossip-tradition about the shop, and they soon instructed her in it. Within a month she attached an identity and a certain relationship to most of the faces which she saw daily. This heavy middle-aged man with the curly brown beard, who went silent and unnoticing to his large room in the corner, was, of course, President Arnold, the giver of the dog-fountains, and the eminent citizen. Twenty-five years before he had begun as a book agent, — peddling Bibles and hymn-books, they said. It was only the other day that the newspapers had interior views of his new mansion on Drexel

Boulevard. One of the papers put a vignette of the philanthropic dog-fountains over the views, as a kind of suggestion that care of dogs led naturally to mansions. But the girls had no faith in the president's philanthropy. They said he was a stingy, grinding old miser, who gave them shamefully small wages and set Miss Whitcomb to abuse them. The ruddy, elderly, bald man, with the smooth-shaven upper lip, was Mr. Webster, the vice-president. He was awfully nice. If he had his way, he would give them more wages and "fire" old Whitcomb, — only Arnold would n't let him. How did the girls know that? Eva supposed they made it up from the jovially paternal air with which Mr. Webster smiled at them when they met him at the elevator landing. The fat, cross-looking old man, whose red-gray side-whiskers seemed mouldy? That was Dr. Parsons, LL. D. He could read Greek and Hebrew, — forgot more every night than Arnold ever knew. The girls seemed mysteriously to take a pride in Dr. Parsons's erudition, as though some of its lustre fell upon them. He only scowled crossly at them in the elevator cage, but that seemed to go naturally with the ability to read Greek and Hebrew. The girls made jokes over his funny whiskers, but they had the deepest respect for him. There was the hated Miss Whitcomb, — closer to them and more definitely conceived than any of these front-office figures. But where did they get hold of that legend about her early love-affair and the drowning of the young man? This legend was, at any rate, part

of the gossip-tradition of the shop. Eva accepted it; but she was more interested in the contemporaneous ground of the humbler employees. Mrs. Hoover, with the eyeglasses, was a grass widow. Miss Lester, the blonde, was engaged to one of the head clerks in the First National Bank, an awfully nice fellow, with money, too. Miss Boyd, that slender one with prominent teeth, worked just so she could dress better. Her folks were well off; but she was a great girl for style and society, — this was Jenny's comment.

So the shop was presented to Eva from the point of view of these girls, who saw it all from an under side, and with some curiously foreshortened perspectives. The people came and went. The same elevators lifted them. The same roof covered them. There was Arnold, intent upon his financial schemes, involved in the social ambitions of his wife, laboring to maintain and improve his position among bigger competitors in his world of the great banks and the big dwellings. There were those of the subordinate ranks, each full of his struggle with the competitors in his own sphere. Here were the threescore young women, with their little wage, their own struggles, and their sentiment running out over the shop, making its dramas and traditions.

Eva had her own woman's curiosity respecting this figure and that in her shop-world, — a curiosity, sometimes, which fastened itself and grew.

"Who is that tall young gentleman with the red beard?" It was Jenny to whom she put the

question indifferently, as she ate her sandwiches and sorted some catalogues at the same time.

"Oh, 've you seen him? Ain't he a dandy? He came a little while ago, — just before you did. His name 's Marvin, and he 's sort of an assistant to Dr. Parsons. Nobody knows much about him here. They say his folks are rich. When did you see him?"

"Oh, I 've seen him up in the front office," said Eva. She added in a moment, casually, "I thought he was good-looking."

"I don't think he 's good-looking," Jenny commented judiciously; "but he looks like a swell. I don't believe he gets more 'n a hundred dollars a month;" she seemed to find a certain satisfaction in the supposition. "Nobody does except the heads of the departments."

Eva perceived that she was the subject of a like interest on the part of some of these young men of the lower shop. Johnny's Mr. Hewlett promptly struck up a friendship with her as the friend of his girl. She accepted Hewlett on the same ground; but as to the unattached young men, her conduct was hardly satisfactory. If she had not been so good-natured, she might have been called stuck up. The man whom Jenny called "that Jones" was early and persistent in his proffers of sociability. The way she refused his invitations to go to lunch in the cafetera seemed to Jenny a little abnormal.

But Jones was not easily discouraged. He was a very lean man, not as young as the others. He

had a drooping, discouraged-looking mustache and a long, receding chin. He wore a black frock coat and a white tie. They said in the shop that his effect of a second-hand minister helped him in his book-peddling business.

Eva was hurrying over to join Sarah, with whom she was going to lunch. Midway to the elevator Jones stepped from the lee of a pillar, where he had evidently been waylaying her. He began speaking hurriedly in his habitual discouraged manner. It was an invitation to go to the grand opera in English, — a trump card.

"Oh, no, I can't go with you," said Eva, with good-natured bluntness. She had a kind of pity for him because he seemed always befooled and made a butt of.

He put out a nervous hand to detain her. "I 'll get seats in the parquet," he declared.

Eva bent a little toward him, her blue eyes sparkling with fun. "Take Jenny," she advised; "that 's a good fellow. She 'll go with you."

Jones looked at her with a kind of reproachful despair. "I 'll take her to the top gallery if I do," he said.

"That 'll do," said Eva, and ran by, bubbling with laughter.

She hurried into the elevator cage with Sarah; but it was too funny. She struggled for a moment, for there were others in the car; then she laughed outright. At once she colored richly, for she became aware that the young man with a red beard was standing beside her; that his singularly ami-

able brown eyes were looking down with frank amusement. She turned away. When she glanced back, in a moment, she saw more particularly that the man was unusually tall, but well proportioned. His skin was very fair, so that he looked quite youthful in spite of the pointed red beard. In his hat, his gloves, his glossy boots, his precisely creased trousers, his short overcoat, there was a suggestion of modernity which Eva vaguely connected with a college and money. But it was not this that impressed her so much. It was the singularly amiable air, which some way, with his largeness and his beard, gave an effect of impracticalness, as though he were only a big boy.

Leaving the elevator, the young man's glance and Eva's fell together, and an inexplicable suggestion made her laugh again.

The man's face lighted with a smile.

"You seem to find this a very amusing place," he said, and at once gave a rather embarrassed glance down, as though he might have offended.

"Yes; it is funny," Eva declared, laughing.

"I hope you 'll take me into the joke some time," he said, "and Miss White, too. She seems not to see it."

He walked away, with a backward, smiling glance over his shoulder.

Eva knew that Sarah was offended; but by the time they were seated in the cafetera, her curiosity got the better of her discretion.

"You know him?" she asked; and then, disingenuously, "Who is he?"

"He did n't seem to need an introduction," Sarah replied with gravity.

This keen little Sarah took the guardian's attitude toward her big ward very seriously. Eva, in her heart, knew how dearly her friend loved to lecture her. There was no resentment. To her the lecturing and mentorship were part of Sarah's affection.

They ate in silence a few minutes. Just when Sarah began flattering herself that contrition was working in her rash companion, Eva burst out, evidently continuing an unbroken chain of thought,—

"He must have thought me an awful fool."

"Of course he did," said Sarah triumphantly. "Men always do when women let them take liberties" —

"Oh, I mean the way I laughed in the elevator," said Eva.

Sarah looked at her stonily. After a moment, as though she hopelessly gave it up, she said, "That was Philip Marvin. He 's Dr. Parsons's assistant; a college man and an Easterner." Then coming back to her point with heavy artillery, "You can judge whether he did n't know better!"

Some way that shot told. Eva looked down gravely a moment, then glanced at Sarah humbly. "You know I was n't brought up that way," she said, meaning an excuse for her recklessness. She supposed that she had no manners; and she believed that Sarah was tremendously endowed with manners. Usually, she did not care. She had the sense of being healthy and good-natured

and well-intentioned, which seemed to her, usually, better than manners. But just now, some way, she felt a deficiency. She supposed, humbly, that she lacked dignity and seriousness, or else she would n't be so free and easy with whatever companionable humanity came her way. No doubt she was a cheeky sort of creature. But she could n't be afraid of men who seemed good fellows. How could one ?

IV

Eva accepted Sarah's superior social light without question. She felt that Sarah was an aristocrat,—partly because the stenographer decked her small person in the most stylish raiment her purse afforded, and held herself proudly above the stenographers' clubs and working-women's societies which she was occasionally invited to join. Naturally, it would be part of her aristocracy to rebel alike at the dependence of womankind and at the necessity which made her work for a living. It scarcely occurred to Eva to inquire how little exterior help Sarah got in supporting her aristocratic attitude. She seldom went anywhere; and Eva was not able to draw any aristocratic inferences from what she knew of the Whites, down in central Indiana, who were related to her own people, and, she thought, a good deal the same sort of folk. She might have suspected, from the facts she knew, that the stenographer must be going back to some of Henry James's or George Meredith's fine ladies for tangible examples of the manners and conduct which she approved.

They had the public library, and Sarah read incessantly,—mostly novels; but novels of the best. Eva found them, on the whole, rather difficult. They were long in getting to the point. Still, she

had, left over from her later public-school days in Hopeville, a certain traditional respect for some of the names on the title-pages. She kept a somewhat vague and impersonal veneration for these things. Once they had been near and personal to her. Her first love experience had been more or less an affair of culture. It had happened soon after she left the village high school, in the middle of the course, to take a position in Tom Sears's store, which was the chief commercial enterprise, as Sears was the chief financial personage, of Hopeville. As a matter of course, education became a merely ornamental interest, when she could begin to earn something toward the support of the family, or at least for her own support. That it should be so seemed perfectly right to her. Nevertheless, she had her sentimental regret over the loss of the ornamental. She liked the school principal, and after his long, grave talk with her, she went to the store in a glow of devotion to the higher things of the mind, although those things were rather indefinitely conceived. Then, naturally, her interest turned to Ernest Thompson, who, as Sears's chief clerk and general confidential factor, brought to stumpy old Tom important but mysterious advantages, consisting in the ability to write a grammatical letter in a fair, legible hand. Ernest had a great reputation in the village as a learned and literary person. He knew Wordsworth and Pope and even Browning by the page, while Eva knew only Longfellow a little and — somewhat uncertainly — Bryant. She looked up

to him. He was thirty when she was eighteen. His hair was prematurely gray, fitting, like his lean, smooth-shaven, not uncomely face, with his scholarly reputation. From the first, he was very nice to her in the store. Then it got to his coming up of evenings to their bare frame house, which needed a coat of paint so badly, and across the gable of which her father had nailed the rude sign, "Palmer House." The sign was for the benefit of the occasional stray commercial traveler whom they caught, and whose dollar and a half a day helped out so much on the regular boarders, for whose three dollars and a half a week Agatha, the elder sister, parboiled herself in the little shed kitchen. Ernest sat in the threadbare parlor and read Tennyson to her by the light of the small, unshaded oil lamp; and their engagement followed along naturally enough. It was hard to say what else might have happened; but a kind of sickness of Hopeville grew in her mind. The poor, bare little town, set out on its vast, monotonous plain, seemed a kind of prison. She used to stand in the open door of Sears's store at twilight, looking down the one dusty, shabby little street to the dingy red station, and watch the overland express roar by, — a long, glittering, shimmering line of lighted Pullman car windows suddenly cutting through, like a rushing spirit of the great world; then only a lessening roar, and the emptiness again. She had been on a railroad train but a dozen times in her life; then to go only short distances. And Ernest, after all, was rather hopelessly of Hope-

ville. Whatever might have happened, the thing that did happen was Emory Soden, the splendid and shining commercial traveler. At any rate, she had got away.

It all came back to her vividly at times, — the little village street, drowsy and thick with dust under the burning August sun, or heaped with dirty snow-banks and empty of life in the bitter winter. A tragedy had happened in her life; she knew that, — the dismal failure of her marriage. She was thinking of it as she left the Arnold Building early one Saturday afternoon, Sarah having gone home with a headache. It was a clear, crisp, generous day in November. The lake at the right had a hard glitter under the bright, cold sun. She was thinking of the tragedy, yet she walked on slowly, looking over at the lake and up at the towering buildings; and she could not be unhappy. All this interested her too much. She ought to be overcast, but she could not help the gay ebullition of her courage and vigor. She could not help the confidence and the zest for living that came of her pure, strong blood and her vigorous limbs. She supposed quite honestly that she was a somewhat vulgar person. Her standard of deportment, certainly, was far inferior to Sarah's, and there were some things that she could get nothing at all out of. The entire and unredeemed failure of her two attempts at the pictures in the Art Institute, — where she had gone with a neighbor, supposed to be gifted with appreciation in that line, when she lived in Chicago before, — and of her one trial at

the Thomas Concerts with Sarah, seemed to condemn her irrevocably enough, to say nothing of her dreadful appetite, her readiness to laugh and make friends with anything human. But down in her heart she did not care: it seemed good to her to be strong and hearty and commonplace; to be easily amused and interested. Perhaps this was because, down in her heart, she knew that she was intelligent and friendly and well-meaning.

A cab horse had fallen on the rough granite pavement. The driver, a policeman, and two or three volunteers were working to get it up. Some men and boys were running into the street to watch. A little crowd was gathering at the edge of the sidewalk to look on from a safe distance. She stepped to the curb to see, her merely idle curiosity blent with knowing pity for the fallen horse. The men about the animal worked as much at cross-purposes as the imperious policeman would let them. Eva had her own ideas as to how they should get the horse to its feet. At length they did get it up. Then the driver, as he rearranged the harness, began resenting the loud reproof of the policeman. The crowd grew larger and more dense. She turned finally, her mind humorously disposed, to push her way out of the press; and she found herself, abruptly, looking at Philip Marvin. There was a certain quick lighting of his face, which told that the encounter was a surprise to him; and in the same instant, quite spontaneously, she smiled, as though the joke of the horse and the crowd was understood between them.

Marvin was lifting his hat, backing away to make room for her.

"It 's better to be a policeman than a tsar," said Marvin lightly. He took a step beside her, and at once they were walking up the street side by side. It had happened naturally enough; but in this position of walking up the street together, a certain indescribably personal sense of the man touched the woman's mind and colored it with an indefinite apprehension. His beard, the swing of his hand, the light tone of his voice, came out with a sharp and intimate individuality. An acute self-consciousness obtruded upon her. There was an odd, nervous, defensive attitude in her mind. She, who was usually so free in her meetings with human kind, now felt as though in some inscrutable way she had put herself in a disagreeable position. Marvin, evidently, was bound to keep up the talk.

Leaving the office a few minutes before and walking idly up the street, he had felt lonely, — so lonely that it was a kind of nostalgia; but he could not tell what it was he longed for. It was nothing definable and everything indefinable. He glanced at the lake, at the buildings, at the people, with a kind of sad, idle discontent. At the corner below he passed two young women, who were taking an eager, voluble farewell as the street car came up. One was pretty, her pink cheek nestling against a wide upturned fur collar. She looked up in an impersonal way as he passed, her soft eyes resting for a moment in his; and his heart warmed and stirred with a vague suggestion

of romance. He glanced back at her graceful figure. To him at that moment the unknown fair woman was the living sign of poetry, and his imagination glowed helplessly up with all its inflammable store of sentiment. It seemed a cruel deprivation that he should not know that particular pretty woman. The formless glow in his mind spread out to figures that he did know; to one —

His idle eyes saw the horse and crowd. He stopped mechanically, vacantly looking on without caring what was happening. Then, abruptly, the handsome young woman of the shop was looking up at him, — at once with a good-humored smile, as though to acknowledge the joke of their having found each other there. On the quick, strong impulse, as though he had been waiting for her, he was speaking and falling in beside her. For a moment she blent confusedly with his dream. It seemed to him, indistinctly, that a relenting fate had kindly handed her over to his loneliness. She was so good to look at in her bloom and vigor. There was an air of capability about her; a kind of sound flesh-and-blood philosophy in the good humor of her smile. His indefinite, desirous rebellion ran out to her for a moment, as though he might, in fact, reasonably say to her: "I'm a good fellow, but I lack companionship. Come on with me and cheer me up!" Then, swiftly, the people, the policeman, the grimy street, the ugly, ponderous elevated road overhead, began obtruding their hard, law-bound reality. Even the being of the young woman obtruded its verity. He noticed

that her jacket was shabby. All the realities told him that young women were not to be walked off with in the easy, lawless way that he had vaguely fancied.

He looked at her luxuriant hair, at her fine cheek, her ear, her handsome blue eyes when she glanced up at him, and he began to perceive that she held herself well away from him; that although she was a shop-girl, and her jacket was shabby, and she could not always be implicitly trusted to manage her parts of speech in the most approved way, and although she had what he would call fairly free manners, nevertheless, she had her conventions and would stand upon them, such as they were, as firmly as the finest lady.

Before he had gone a block, the lawless, romantic adventure, which had glowed formlessly up in his thoughts, was quite out of the question. They parted at the foot of the elevated stairs. He glanced back and saw her going up. It struck him that she was a thoroughly good woman, modest and self-respecting. Suddenly, illogically, unexpectedly, whimsically, he found himself glad with all his heart that she was good. He felt a strong relief, as though oddly he had been relieved from something that would have been painful and disagreeable. He was grateful to her because she was good.

Eva glanced down from the little window in the elevated station. She did not see Marvin on the crowded flagging below. She was happy because she had missed something unpleasant, she hardly

knew what, which she had been vaguely in fear of when she found herself with Marvin. How nice he had been! She was not a timid woman, but she thanked him in her heart for having been good and gentlemanly.

V

That odd sense of gratitude to Marvin for having been so good and gentlemanly remained in Eva's mind. Inscrutably it made everything seem more pleasant, as though it proved that after all the world was a nice, friendly, well-mannered affair. The pleasure in this feeling was so strong in her mind that after dinner she casually mentioned the encounter to Sarah,— she did not know why, unless it was that a mysterious good fortune had befallen her, and she wished surreptitiously to hand over a little of it to Sarah.

It occurred to her that Sarah must have a sarcastic disapproval ready; she saw that the thing stood at best on a very tottering basis socially. To her surprise, Sarah's judgment was not delivered. Instead, Sarah incidentally asked some questions about the encounter.

The questions brought rather copious answers. Presently, in a half absent, reminiscent way, Eva observed, "How funny he is with his *a's!* I suppose that 's the Boston accent."

Sarah's judgment failed because her romance intervened. She was looking over at Eva's profile. The fine, straight nose, the lips, the soft, full throat, the luxuriant hair, fed the romance. It came to her that men would always be falling in

love with this woman. They did not fall in love with Sarah. There had been only that one inconsequential affair of long ago. She was getting near to thirty. If her attitude was intensely virginal, there was a kind of passion, a sort of jealous resentment, at the bottom of it. Now she looked at Eva, whom men would love any way, and a breath of the great passion touched her. The woman in her made submission to it, even as it appeared in her friend. At that moment a certain helpless and fairly impersonal jealousy of Eva's beauty died in her mind. Her love of her friend made its last submission.

In a few moments she asked abruptly, "Do you ever hear from your husband, Eva?"

In spite of the abruptness, there was a fondness in the tone; and Eva at once understood. She felt Sarah's feminine sympathetic interest flow out to her from a state of feeling that corresponded to her own. Ordinarily, it was the last subject that she would willingly approach. She had stubbornly kept her own counsel, and had been resolved still to keep it. But just now that question was not in the least painful. In her loosened mood this secret experience rose naturally, overflowed, and ran out to her friend.

"No, I never hear from him," she said. "I have n't heard from him myself since I left him, a year and a half ago. The last I knew was six months ago, and he was down in New Orleans then."

She felt herself launched in a confession, and

there was no resistance to the impulse. "I never told you why I left him, Sarah," she went on. "I've often wondered whether it would have been different if I had been older, — I mean if I 'd had more sense. I was not twenty when I married him, you know. Even before that, before I met Emory, Ernest Thompson used to tell me that I 'd marry young. It seems absurd for a girl that 's only seventeen to have a lover, but I suppose Ernest and I were lovers. You 've seen Emory, and you know that he was handsome and pleasant. Then he came from outside. You know in a little town a traveling man is a sort of superior being. Emory dressed so well, and spent his money so free, and was such good company, that he was a kind of superior traveling man. The girls used to walk down the street where they thought they 'd get a chance to see him, and even the men used to tell over the stories he told. I suppose the town made a kind of novel out of him. And if they said he was wicked, too, I guess that only made him more interesting, because I 'd never known any wicked men in my life, except old John Turner and the blacksmith who got drunk with him. But they were ragged and dirty and homely, and if I ever believed that Emory was wicked, — which I guess I really never did, — I supposed some way it was a gentlemanly, well-dressed, polite kind of wickedness that was n't really wicked at all. Well, we were married, and in the fall he brought me to Chicago, and that was a good deal like going to heaven to me. I guess I really loved him himself,

aside from the fine things we imagined about him, and it went on for a long time. Of course, even at the beginning, I saw that he was very careless about money; but I thought I could help him that way because I was brought up to know what economy means. I don't need to tell you all about it. It seemed dreadful to me to be in debt, — a kind of sin, you know. But Emory was always going in debt more and more for things that I did n't know about, and after a while I saw that he really did n't care to pay people what he owed. He got mad if they dunned him too much, and abused them, and he always seemed to feel that he was injured some way if they tried to force him to pay, and he was always injured by the houses that he worked for because they would n't pay him enough, and because they took things out of his salary. And then he 'd spend all the money he had for anything that took his fancy. He spent a great deal in ways that I never suspected then, although every once in a while he 'd send me word that he could n't come home Saturday. I soon found out that good clothes did n't grow on bushes for him. When I married him, I thought a hundred dollars a month a princely income. He would lie awfully to the people he owed. He 'd promise to pay them when he knew he could n't, and when he could pay them, he 'd spend the money for something else, — like as not something for me, because he was generous enough. Then sometimes he 'd put me where I 'd have to lie because he had lied, and we quarreled over that, and he thought I

was on the side of the people who were trying to injure him. Still, all this trouble was about money, and he was kind and good-natured enough, and I was always happy if I had half a chance, so I did n't think out what it meant. Then, a little bit at a time, I found that he lied to me as well as to the people he owed. That almost broke my heart. But, after all, he was like a child. He could n't resist doing whatever tickled his fancy, and then he 'd get out of it the best way he could. And if anybody had asked me then, I would have said he was a good husband, because he did n't strike me, I suppose, and was mostly good-natured if I let him alone about the debts. Well, I found some letters; then some other things happened. He explained it all, but the explanations did n't hang together, — and you see I could n't trust him any more. I remembered how, once or twice, when I 'd been traveling with him, I 'd seen him act so familiar with some dining-room girls at the hotels. But you know, in spite of all, I could n't hardly believe that, even after down in my heart I knew it was true. And sometimes I even kind of hoped that I 'd never find out that it was true. It seemed too dreadful. He sent me a telegram that he had to stay in Clinton over Sunday to settle up a claim against a customer. Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Warren and I went down on Wabash Avenue to see a panorama. I 'd told her Emory was n't coming home, and when we were coming away we ran right into him, face to face, coming out of a place with a girl. Honest, Sarah, I thought I 'd die!

Even then I hoped he would n't come home. Though I did n't love him any more, and had n't since I began to think about other women, still, it seemed awful to break up. But he did come home, and came out in the kitchen where I was getting dinner, just as though nothing had happened. He brought me a new jacket, and he said he 'd got a telegram in Clinton that Tommy Wood, a traveling man he knew, was very sick here and wanted to see him, and the place I saw him come out of was where Wood boarded, and the woman was Mrs. Wood. He stood in the kitchen door and told me that, smiling, his hand on his hip, and some way he looked just like he used to when he came in Tom Sears's store and I used to think he was a kind of knight. It all came over me some way, and I said, 'For God's sake, Emory, don't lie to me any more. Strike me if you want to, or kill me, or go away and leave me; but for God's sake don't lie to me any more!' It seemed to me as though the lies had been killing me. It was a kind of torture. I could n't stand it any more."

Her voice shook a little, and Sarah abruptly bent her head and put her hands to her face.

"He got mad then," Eva went on very quietly, as though she did not wish to accuse him any more, "and said I need n't believe him if I did n't want to, and asked me how much better off I 'd be if I did n't believe him,—as though I could n't help myself. We ate dinner without saying a word. Then he went into the front room to smoke and read his paper, too sulky to speak to

me. After I 'd done up the dishes I waited a little while, then went in there, and I sat down beside him quiet as I could, for I did n't want to do anything that would make him madder. And I asked him just please to tell me whether he 'd been true to me. But it did make him mad, and he said, 'No, I ain't! Now are you satisfied?' I went out in the kitchen and stayed there all night, while he went to bed. Along toward morning I fell asleep, sitting in the chair by the kitchen table. When I woke up, it was daylight, and I thought he would be waking up pretty soon, and it would be just that misery and kind of degradation of arguing. For I had made up my mind never to live with him any more. I knew all about it then, and about those other women, and if I went on living with him after that, I 'd be just like one of them, — living with him because he supported me. He thought I could n't do anything else but go on living with him because I had no money. It makes me horribly ashamed sometimes even now, — just as though in a way I 'd been on a level with those other women. And I would not be made ashamed. Well, I just got me a cup of coffee, and put on my hat and cloak and went out into the street. I did n't want to see him again. After I 'd walked around awhile, I thought I 'd come over to your house, and I did, you know. And the next day after he 'd gone, I packed up my things and went back to Hopeville. That was a mistake. I ought to have stayed right here and got some work. But I had only a little bit of money. I had to sell some

things at the pawnshop to get my ticket to Hopeville, and I was down-hearted and afraid to stay then. I 'm ashamed of that now, — because I was a little afraid of him then, — afraid he 'd come around and annoy me. But it does n't matter now, for I 'm all right."

Her voice was perfectly clear and steady as she finished. Her hands lay still in her lap.

Little Sarah bent forward, her fingers nervously twisted together. For a minute she said nothing. When she spoke, Eva understood what was in her mind.

"Why don't you get a divorce, Eva?" she asked, with a kind of softness.

Eva's hand went up to the arm of the chair and moved slowly back and forth along it. She looked down. "Well," she said, "my father had Mr. Culbertson — he 's a sort of lawyer — look it up once. You see, I left him instead of his leaving me, so it was n't desertion. Mr. Culbertson said if it was infidelity, I 'd have to prove it by witnesses in court. I never really thought much of getting a divorce, it would cost so much. That was my father's idea. He was the only one I told all about it as I 've just told it to you. I was so ashamed of it, I did n't want to tell anybody. Then imagine what that would be, — going around to find witnesses, and going into court with them to tell all that to a roomful. I 'd almost as lief go into court to prove something of that kind about myself. Seems to me it would be almost as degrading. No, I could n't do that. Besides, I don't need any

divorce. He has no claim on me. I can go on as I am. I don't know 's I was a good wife. Maybe with another woman he 'd been different ; or maybe I ought to have given him another chance and been more forgiving and all that. But I did n't want to be a wife the way things were, and if I just got up and left that way, because I would n't stand it for a minute after I knew for sure, why, it seems to me that I sort of took it on myself to go alone after that. Of course I say I knew for sure, but I really did n't know anything except what he blurted out when he was mad, and I suppose that don't actually prove anything. I knew it for sure myself because he was the sort of a man he was. When Mr. Culbertson talked to me, I saw I really had n't any proof of anything, and if I was willing to leave Emory that way, seems to me I have n't any right to have anything to do — with any other man — and I never shall have." Her hand turned around the knob at the end of the chair arm, over and back, over and back.

Sarah got up, as though the conversation had ended. She walked across to the window to look into the street. She stood beside Eva's chair. Her slim fingers touched the shining hair over the sitting woman's temples.

" Well, maybe not — now," she suggested.

VI

The tragedy of a faithless husband and a wrecked marriage was one thing, but after all it had nothing to do with the near, insistent thing of getting a better job and more wages. It was singularly apart from the fact that her shabby clothes were giving out, her old jacket was too thin for December on the lake shore, and that she was down to three pairs of stockings.

The shop-girls were nearly unanimous in warning her against the vast retail establishments on State Street, which she had thought of because it seemed that her experience in Tom Sears's store might help. Some of them were all right, they said, but it was hard to get into them without city experience and references. Others were all wrong. They paid you nothing, and then stole that from you by fines and other devices. The floor-walker came along and blackguarded you before customers.

"You think Whitcomb's bad," said Jenny; "but anyhow she's a woman. In some of those stores the men say what they please to the girls."

Eva found a wealth of job-hunting lore among her companions. All the big establishments and all lines of work were classified and apprised from the young women's point of view. She found that

a few employments which offered good wages were tabooed by the experienced. "It gives a girl a bad name; respectable girls keep out of it," they said; and she accepted their convention without question. There were the trades, — stenography, typewriting, printing, binding, press-feeding, millinery, — but she knew none of them. Finally, there were the "want ads." in the newspapers. She followed them up unflaggingly, and began to acquire her own job-hunting lore. It was encouraging at first to see how many persons were offering light work and good pay to intelligent, energetic young women, experience not necessary. When she tracked these offers down, what she mostly found was a chance to sell patent medicine, or cosmetics, or hair curlers, or corsets, on commission, — first having bought the "agent's outfit" at half price, cash down, or having deposited twenty dollars under a dubious contract. Occasionally it was a chance to be trained for the ballet at a very small price, cash down. There were other chances with a preliminary "cash down." Now and then she read in the newspaper how the young women beneficiaries of some of these alluring opportunities had the man arrested for swindling. Almost always it seemed to be merely her money they were after. Two or three times out of twenty she found a disagreeable air, and left promptly. Once a ballet man got between her and the door and incautiously put his hand on her arm. The push she gave him toppled him over a chair. As she glared down at him, her brows contracted, her

face white, her blue eyes ablaze, he experienced an unwonted feeling of respect for a woman, — he thought she might thrash him if he got up; and he lay very still, with a sick grin, while she stalked out. But this was only one experience out of a score, many of which took her into rather dingy and unpromising places, where, however, she encountered nothing worse than a scheme for getting some money from her.

She and Sarah had their jokes over these adventures, and they did not discourage her, although she saw that the quest of a job was more difficult than she had supposed.

When she answered the advertisement for a young woman to act as cashier in a restaurant, and received a reply written on the letter-paper of a law firm instead of a patent medicine concern or a book house, she began to attach a definite hope to it. The reply was signed "Clifford R. Cobb." It appointed an interview the next day between ten and twelve. The address took her north on Dearborn Street to an old building, where she had to climb two broad flights of stairs because there was no elevator. She guessed even before she saw the suite of large shabby rooms that this law firm was not of the over-paid sort.

It was after eleven o'clock when she came, to spare the least possible time from the shop; but four women were sitting on a bare bench near the door, and she divined, from her experience in job-seeking, that they were candidates like herself. When she mentioned Mr. Cobb, the shabby office

boy merely motioned her to a seat on the bench. She could see there had been many before her. As she sat down, the door of an inner room opened. A spare, middle-aged woman came out, and a little man with a red beard stood in the doorway, fingering his beard and looking at the bench. The spare woman hurried across to the hall door with downcast eyes, and Eva knew, with a throb of pity, that she had been rejected. A young, overgrown girl on the end of the bench gave a startled look around, as if to make sure that she was next, arose with awkward haste, and hurried in to the inquisitor and judge. The inner door closed behind her.

Eva knew the proceeding. She had been through it before. She was too young and vigorous, hope welled too strongly in her, to be afraid. At the worst, if this particular job failed, she could wait for another chance. But these lines of waiting, hoping, dreading women always touched her pity. She felt obscurely that it was wrong. She looked at the women beside her. They too took stock of her as their competitor. A neat, frail girl in spectacles sat next her ; then a dark woman, about thirty ; and at the end of the bench a tall blonde, whose clothes outshone them all, and whose straw-colored hair was wonderfully frizzed. Their constraint and self-consciousness in respect of one another seemed part of the cruelty. It was to free herself from the taint of it that Eva spoke to the nice girl next her in a low voice.

" Have you had experience ? " she asked.

The girl smiled at her in ready friendliness. "I 've had a little experience," she said, under her breath. "I was cashier in a candy store; but I had to give it up on account of my eyes, — the lights in the mirrors, the doctor said."

"Then I guess you 'll get the place," Eva laughed.

"No! As soon as you came in, I said to myself, 'She 'll get it!'" said the girl.

The dark woman looked at them sternly and edged a little away, as though this making friends were a sort of unfair advantage over the other candidates.

The fatal inner door opened. The overgrown girl came out, embarrassed. The blonde got up, smiled encouragingly at the little man with the red beard, and went within. Only a minute later, she came out with a silly, self-conscious smile of defeat. But she recovered sufficiently to toss her bedizened head airily. The dark woman got up at once, and made for the door with militant directness. Before the door closed, they heard her aggressive voice. They heard it at intervals until she came out, stormily.

"It 's no use your waiting!" she declared in a loud voice to the two on the bench. "He don't want anybody at all. He don't know what he does want!"

When the spectacled girl came out, Eva stood up, smiling at her, expecting that she had succeeded. The girl smiled back as she advanced. Mr. Cobb stood in the doorway, fingering his beard, looking

at Eva, and making an odd, quick little bow for her to enter. Nevertheless, she paused an instant for her friend.

"I 'm to know to-morrow," said the girl; "but you 'll get it," she whispered, smiling as they passed.

When Eva entered, Mr. Cobb closed the door behind her, went around to the other side of the table, sat down, and drew a file of letters before him, with motions so swift and abrupt that they seemed galvanic.

"Let 's see — your name?" he said briskly, looking at his letter.

"Mrs. Soden."

"Oh — Mrs." The title seemed to check him. He plucked at his beard, looking over at her questioningly; then at her letter, which was signed, "Eva Soden."

"I don't like your being married," he said abruptly.

It was so plainly impersonal — a mere business detail — that Eva laughed in spite of herself. "Maybe I don't like it, either," she suggested. "I have myself to take care of," she added seriously, as a sufficient explanation.

Perhaps it was the good-humored laugh. At any rate, Cobb looked up at her quickly and sharply, with an effect of arrested attention; and on the instant she became to him, not the mere impersonal bundle of availability or disabilities which he had considered in the others, but a young woman, eminently personal and human. It seemed

to relieve his mind of a stress and irritation. He flung himself back in his chair and laughed a little with her.

"Well, if we can't agree, I hope you won't want to fight me, like one of 'em did," he said. "I thought she was going to throw me out of the window." He chuckled so amiably that Eva began liking him. She saw that he had a white, full brow, and that his slim, nervous hand had a way of darting to the point of his reddish beard and tugging at it, as though it hurt him and he would be rid of it. She told him what experience she had, — that gained in Tom Sears's store in Hopeville, besides the little in the publishing company.

"Well, Mrs. Soden, I 'm going to open a restaurant, and I want a cashier. I 'd almost made up my mind to get a man." He looked over at her, frankly judging her. "I want to get hold of a woman who 's intelligent and attractive, and who 's got some get-up-and-get about her. Anybody can sit on a stool and make change. I want a woman that 's got some head and nerve, and can take hold of things a little. My restaurant 's going to be a big place" —

He plunged into the scheme. It was to be a very large place near the Board of Trade, cheap, but clean and well ordered, with a long lunch counter, where men could sit on stools and eat quickly, and a cafetera part, where men could sit at little tables and wait on themselves ; then with a regular restaurant, too, where they could have linen on the tables and be served by waiters. He went on ex-

plaining with a certain eloquence. Eva wondered once or twice when they would get back to the question of the job, and what the judgment would be. Abruptly, he pulled out his watch.

"Well! it 's a quarter after twelve!" he declared, and got up. "Now the pay," he said, as he reached for his hat. "I thought ten dollars a week to start with, and more soon if we got along. Would that be satisfactory?"

"Well," said Eva, surprised; "but" —

"I 'll tell you," Cobb broke in, "you come down to the restaurant at noon to-morrow, and we 'll talk it over a little more. I guess we can make a bargain."

Eva found the restaurant in the chaotic processes of creation, in the basement of the La Salle Building, near the Board of Trade, — a big place, full of lumber, pipes, tools, and the litter of the busy workmen. The "talking over" with Cobb consisted mostly of his showing her around the place, — where the lunch counter was to be, where the cafetera, where the kitchen, — now a dismal cave full of swarthy plumbers.

She came away definitely engaged. The two days before the opening she spent at the restaurant, helping Cobb bring order out of his chaos. There was a wagon-load of dishes, a heap of linen, table utensils by the hundredweight, to be received, checked, disposed.

Opening day came on. The twoscore women swarmed in early, some for waitresses, some in maids' caps and aprons to stand behind the long

counters of the cafetera and deliver the edibles to the patrons who waited on themselves; some for dishwashers, kitchen-helpers, and for the salvage corps that dogged the retreating feet of the hungry host and carried away the dishes, knives, and forks to be cleaned. The machine stuck at a hundred points. The head cook charged out of his kitchen-cave, clamoring for Mr. Cobb because of a leak in the steam-pipe. Demand ranged up and down the cafetera counters, — the consignment of factory pie was late, and when it came there was no pumpkin. The waitresses could n't find anything. The printer's boy tarried on the way with the bills of fare. The clock ticked on toward eleven. Cobb performed prodigies. He crawled under the pipes to find the leak, and thence, at the fluttering importunities of the cafetera women, issued the prompt order to strike pumpkin pie from the bill.

The clock struck eleven. The doors were opened. The field was ready — in a fashion. Eva, having found the lost dessert spoons, hurried to her stand near the door, — a little semicircular counter topped with woven wire in dim resemblance to a kiosk, — and mounted her high stool. Her eye commanded the long room of irregular shape, showily done by the decorators in red, with clusters of incandescent lamps. Over in the corner to the right was the parallelogram of the lunch counter, surrounded by stools; next, the bare little tables of the cafetera section, convenient to the long counters piled with pastry, like ammunition, behind which the women stood as

behind breastworks, waiting the onslaught of the foe. In the L of the room to the left were the white tables at which guests would be served, and where the waitresses were still busy helping one another find things. The cashier was tired, but happy. For two days she had worked early and late. It had been ten o'clock the night before when she and Cobb got through checking up the linen, and this morning she had come down at seven. But she was happy. She had been doing something to help make all this. Cobb had relied upon her. Already she had a certain authority with the waitresses. The capacity in her had found an opportunity. She was no longer a peg in a hole.

The earliest patrons began straggling in, looking around experimentally as at a strange place, going off to the lunch counter or to the cafetera. Others came, questioningly. Mr. Cobb was still busy in the kitchen. Eva slipped from her stool and began walking about, anxious to see that everything was right. A man was complaining to his companion of a chop. It was raw, he grumbled. She intervened at once, and mollified him with a new chop.

She felt that Cobb ought to be out there to assure them of the restaurant's honorable intentions. She tried to do that as well as she could, walking back and forth, by a kind of personally friendly and companionable air toward the guests. Her experience in Sears's store stood her in good stead. Here and there a question arose among the patrons. She settled it. She saw at once that

some of these young men were ready to stop her and have their joke with her even this first day. The early ones began to leave, and she got back to her stool to take their money. As it came on to noon, they were filing by her steadily, and her hands were busy with their checks and change.

The proprietor flashed by her on innumerable errands about the big feeding-house. The machinery still stuck and creaked in its newness; but it was going: Cobb's Café was under way.

It went with an increasing momentum. On succeeding days a larger and larger horde of the hurried and hungry came. The advance guard appeared soon after eleven, at twelve it was a steady stream, at half past twelve a charge in force. The waitresses, behind their breastworks of counters, heaped with edibles like ammunition, faced besiegers three ranks deep. Over at the lunch counter impatient patrons, their hats tilted to the backs of their heads, waited for a stool to be vacated that they might pounce upon it. Men and women carrying plates or trays of food to the bare little tables of the cafetera skillfully avoided colliding with one another. At the linen-decked tables in the L, where the leisurely and luxurious ate, the waitresses hurried back and forth. The clatter of dishes, the hum of talk, the sight of several hundred people rapidly eating close together, gave the effect of the breaking up of a famine. The fastidious would not have liked it. Cobb planned for the hungry and hurried, not for the fastidious. There were scores of women in the

throng, coming, like the men, from the immense hives of La Salle, Adams, and Jackson streets; from towering buildings, each of which housed its thousands; from banks, brokers' offices, law offices, railroad offices, insurance offices, telegraph offices, where they did their day's work and took their day's wage. They came singly, in couples, sometimes in companies of a dozen, eagerly talking over the shop or the diversion of the night before. Now and then a young man brought a young woman; but mostly the sexes stood on an ungallant business footing. This did not prevent a certain free and easy sociability with the handsome cashier.

At the end of the week, Eva had a good many of these young men and a few of the young women identified to a degree. Even the rank and file of them, who marched by silently, depositing their coins, had their consciousness that the cashier was a pretty woman. There were others who had a friendly nod and a word; and a few who tried for a more personal footing. Eva took them all on the ground which they proposed, so far as it could fairly be called a matter of business. For example, she did not at all mind the fat young man with the diamond shirt stud and an air which was distinctly of the Board of Trade. At the end of the week, he was leaning his fore-arms comfortably on the rim of her kiosk, smoking (against the rules), and telling her that he came there only to see her. He had a snub nose in the midst of his fat, impudent face, and humorous little gray eyes, which saved him from being taken seriously.

"I 'm drummin' up trade for your shop," he told Cobb, with irrepressible sociability, when the proprietor happened to be by the cashier's stand. "If you was bright, you 'd have a grand prize competition, — the felleh that brought in the first fifty new customers would get the hand and heart of the cashier."

This was more or less the basis of a number of the young men who loitered a little by the kiosk and tried their jokes. Cobb was not insensible to the utilitarian side of this sociability. But Eva was useful to the establishment in more substantial ways. She could take the direction of things. Beginning the third week, he raised her wage to twelve dollars.

The day she got that week's wage, she left the restaurant early and went over to State Street. Coming home with the large pasteboard box under her arm, she rang impatiently at the peeled funereal door, and when the solemn landlady let her in she rushed upstairs, and burst into the room like a breath of the brisk, vigorous air which dyed her cheeks red.

Sarah had already lighted the lamp, and sat curled up in the big old wooden rocking-chair reading, with a shawl over her slight shoulders, — for the management was not prodigal of heat at the Tomb. The bare branches of the willow-tree in front of the window looked cold. On the street people hurried and huddled in their wraps. The discolored fringes of the last snow still filled the gutters on the shady side of the street. It was

the first strong, definite touch of winter. The air felt like Christmas.

Sarah sprang up. "Well, let's see it!" she demanded. "Reckless creature!"

Eva handed over the box, and stood by, beaming her triumph, while Sarah undid the string and lifted out the new cloak.

Sarah examined the garment, but Eva cut in, showing off this and that good point which her impatience could not wait for Sarah to discover alone.

"I could get one almost like it a dollar and a half cheaper at the Fair; but the lining" — She went on, explaining all the details of the purchase, while together they turned the cloak over, felt the cloth, tested the buttons, tried the pockets. She was talking as she took off the old jacket, throwing it back from the shoulder and getting it off with robust motions, as though she were bursting out of it. She put on the new cloak with a kind of gingerliness, as though she feared to harm it. She turned around and around, and walked away and back again, while Sarah critically examined the fit. Then she walked back and forth for her own satisfaction, looking at herself in the speckled mirror.

Presently she laughed. "I suppose I'm a fool about pretty things to wear," she said. "Still, I don't believe I'm as much a fool as some women, for if I can't have 'em, it don't make me miserable. I never did have but two or three real nice things in my life — I mean just like I wanted. But —

my ! I can't help loving 'em." She passed her hands down the sides of the new cloak with a kind of affection. " That 's the very nicest cloak I ever had," she said, " and I earned all the money and saved it all myself, — twenty-two dollars. Besides, I 've got money to send some things home for Christmas ! "

This, at last, was independence. She could dress respectably and pay her full half of the housekeeping expenses, and have a little money left some weeks. She was going to open a savings bank account as soon as she got the little things to send home for Christmas. This was independence. They could go to the theatre once in a while. They had nobody to answer to. They had the world to rummage round in at will. They did not rummage because Sarah disliked the cold ; but there was always the blessed sense that they could go and come as they pleased. It seemed to Eva that everything was just right. To be sure, many suggestions came into her mind ; but she did not give them welcome. It seemed to her that her greatest good fortune would consist in being let alone to work out the chance which she had won. She was making her way, and there was no man to demand her peace.

VII

One could scarcely miss Mr. Cobb's large feeding-establishment. Wide marble steps led down to it from the flagging. Above these steps the proprietor had erected a gorgeous canopy of brass and colored glass. The canopy appeared to have a vague intention of being Gothic, perhaps because the building to whose vast wall it clung rather leaned to the Italian renaissance. The canopy, at least, was in the form of an arched gable, surmounted by a brass spire which reached to the second story of the building. The large, white glass letters of the sign "Cobb's Café" were surely Gothic. At the foot of the steps there was a glass case holding some cuts of beef, a heap of shell oysters, and a dressed chicken.

A fine, dry snow sifted noiselessly under the canopy. Periodically, a boy appeared with a broom and swept the steps. Upon the flagging of Adams Street, and around the corner on La Salle Street, the snow was ground under the feet of the hurrying throngs.

Philip Marvin smiled at the canopy, paused an instant to watch the boy sweep the steps, then walked slowly on to La Salle Street, without going down to the restaurant as he had intended. He stopped on the corner in a mere lapse of will,

not making any effort to regain direction of himself, and looked idly about. He stood in the junction of two streams of traffic, where the busy people from La Salle and from Adams Street continually jostled him to this side and to that, brushed him with their umbrellas, threw angry glances at him for being in the way. They poured unceasingly out of the snow-blurred vistas of the streets, hurried by, disappeared. He stepped to the curb to avoid the jostling. His gloved hands hung idly at his sides. He wore a stiff, black hat with a narrow brim, and the snow fell on his beard and neck. Many eyes, especially the eyes of women, glanced with a touch of surprise at this large figure, with its curiously alien effect of leisurely contemplation and of indifference to the storm. Marvin had now, as always, the sense of being alien to Chicago, whither he had come the spring before under protest. He felt a sheer impotence to lay any tangible hold upon the big, sprawling, clattering, grimy town, which he knew so little that La Salle Street was almost a novelty to him. Behind him, five squares away, the low façade of the Art Institute blocked the street, shutting off the view of the lake. Ahead, about as far away, the ponderous structure of a bridge filled up the blutred vista. The bridge itself, even at that short distance, was dim in the thick air. He knew the country in certain broad, lateral lines. There was Michigan Avenue, which was for show; next Wabash Avenue, which was for the elevated road; then State Street, where a deluge of women

madly shopped; then Dearbon Street, as to the uses of which he was uncertain; and Clark Street, which seemed impudently to extend a dirty hand, either mendicant or predatory, and to offer him the alternative of buying a dubious drink or losing his watch. This thoroughfare before him, running from the Board of Trade to the Stock Exchange between towering walls of banks, was the edge of his map; but he remembered indistinctly that to the west, between this and the river, the streets stilled their clamor amid vast silent warehouses of the wholesale dry-goods region.

What was he doing there? he asked himself in that vacuity of purpose which had befallen when he walked by the restaurant instead of entering as he had intended. After all, why did he hesitate to enter? He had done so many foolish things that one more would not matter. He turned about definitely, and even with the act his heart beat up a little, and a subtle glow suffused his mind. At eight and twenty he understood himself well enough to know that it was not this particular girl that stirred his pulse. In his lonely discontent, in the resentful sense of a certain sterility in his life, he had now and again permitted his idling thoughts to run out to her handsome face and figure. He had thought dreamily about this woman, knowing all the time that the real woman made little difference to him. The artist must have his model. The soft curve of her throat, the delicious, edible pink in her cheek, above all the readily smiling lips and frank eyes, served admirably. For all he knew, he

might find her audibly chewing gum and flirting with a bar-tender. He told himself that he wished to see whether she was as pretty as he had thought.

He went down the broad marble steps, under the bedizened canopy, and entered the restaurant. He was early, and the big place was nearly bare of patrons. He saw first of all that the ornamental wire cage at the left of the door, which must be the cashier's stand, was empty.

A brown-eyed slip of a girl stepped up and handed him a square of pasteboard, of which he knew the use, thanks to his initiation in the cafetera next the publishing house. He started indecisively toward the lunch counter, as being the simplest arrangement for feeding. The slip of a girl looked after this tall, large stranger, whose dress suggested that he might go to all the lengths of luxury and have a waitress fetch his luncheon to one of the linen-covered tables, but who yet wandered to the cheaper lunch counter with a kind of absent-minded aimlessness, as though he might get lost and have to be helped out. Once or twice in the leisurely intervals of handing out checks to other early arrivals she stepped back and looked over at his broad back, rising above the lunch counter. She saw that he ate a sandwich and hardly tasted his tea. She was looking at him when the cashier, coming briskly back to the cage, put a hand on her shoulder in friendly, affectionate patronage.

"Well, Tillie!" said Eva cheerily, by way of a greeting. The girl beamed gratefully up at her

great and good and beautiful heroine. As Eva got on her stool in the kiosk, Tillie forgot the stranger for a moment in the more vital interest of loving and admiring the cashier. Then she saw the stranger approaching. Eva saw him, too; and at once Tillie understood that these two important personages knew each other.

Marvin stood before the cage. Although he had eaten with his hat on like the other men at the lunch counter, he took it off as he approached the desk, and he now held it in his hand. There was a sort of incompetence in this unusual deference, and there was a slight, vague smile on Marvin's face as he looked down at the cashier, laying his check before her and fumbling in his pocket for a coin. His soft, yellowish hair was parted in the middle and brushed smoothly down over his large, high head. With his size, his bared head, his slow, doubtful, self-conscious smile, he had the effect of a kind of inveterate helplessness, as though he could not get himself adjusted to circumstances. It might almost have been foolish, but that his bigness and a sort of elemental seriousness saved him.

Eva took the coin, deftly slipped out the change, and smiled a little. In spite of his good clothes and his look of prosperity, she felt a mysterious compassion for him.

"You like this better than the book business?" he said.

"Yes, I like it a good deal better." On that ground she visibly warmed up. "The pay is bet-

ter. I get twice as much here as I did at the Economy, and I feel a good deal more independent. I feel as though I was really of some account here; and there 's nobody to find fault. It 's better than the Economy!"

"I 'm glad to hear it," he said; "perhaps I 'll try it myself." On the cheaply won laugh, with a backward smile, he went out, putting on his hat.

Marvin went up the street in a little glow of satisfaction; under the vague impression that something pleasant had happened. But this rosy color of his thought lasted only as long as a certain atmosphere of the woman clung about him. Before he reached Clark Street, it had quite faded out. He asked himself what there was to be satisfied about; and answered himself (with a smile which surprised the crossings policeman, who received it full in the face) that it must be the ham sandwich. Certainly there had been nothing else. He could not be congratulating himself upon a half-minute talk with a young woman who spent her days talking to any male stranger that claimed the privilege as a premium on his twenty-cent lunch.

The little adventure seemed quite ridiculous, and he came back to that helpless questioning of himself which had so grown upon him of late. Was he not, after all, at bottom altogether a fraud and a pretense? Had he the capacity for honest seriousness? For example, his good clothes, his pointed red beard, the manner of wearing his hair, — what were these for but to convey the sugges-

tion that he was something of a gentleman and something of an artist. Yet he was not at all either a gentleman or an artist. Or was he not just a little bit of both? Why did he love the suggestion so much that he could not bear to part with it, if there was nothing genuine behind it? He could tell himself definitely enough that he was a cheap clerk in a publishing house which was itself a good deal of a fraud. Yet it would have broken his heart to sacrifice the pointed beard. Not that a beard more or less mattered at all for its own sake; but because, in his stubborn impracticalness, he needed to wear a sign of his faith that he was one of those who are elected. He was resigned to the clerkship, to the material and social poverty, to the general incompetence; but if he could not believe that, after all, he had heard the nightingale and smelled the rose, he would have been utterly bankrupt. So he went on, flaunting his Parisian beard as a kind of wide-open index to his dearest, most secret dream. He would have been overwhelmed with shame if any one had asked him whether it had not been his ambition to be a painter. But the reflection of his own beardless face would have been as sad as a foreview of his grave.

It seemed to him that he had managed to get mixed up and go wrong from the very beginning, when he was born at East Fairfax, Massachusetts. That was the basic absurdity which determined the character of the whole incongruous performance. It was even begun, he supposed, with his

father, who had tried to be an architect without having succeeded in being anything very definitely; and from whose easy incompetence he had been rescued or kidnapped by more vigorous members of the family, whose preference happened to be for the church. The family was of some provincial consequence. It had the effect of a long descent and of a tangible tradition; and it took its eight recorded generations of inconsequential New England parsons and traders as seriously, even as solemnly, as another family takes its eight generations of dukes. The family tradition sent him off to a little rustic seminary with a strong theological flavor, and all the time he was dreaming of Paris and Rome (not ecclesiastic Rome). He had made his little secret, timid attempts at things that his heart glowed over. But nothing came of them. The will imposed from without, the ordered march of circumstances, was too strong for him, or he was too inert, too impractical. It all came over him at times, and filled him with a kind of bewilderment. Why had he submitted to it? Or was it simply fate? When he thought of it, his own first, ineffectual revolt, when he had run off to Paris in the face of everything, seemed almost more ridiculous than anything else. To be sure, he had got to Paris, the goal. He had stood there with utterly idle, empty hands. Yes, there he had felt that a weight as of centuries lay upon his hands; that he could never raise them to do this work. For the rest, he had spent his small capital so gayly that at the end of sixty days he was coming

back to New England in the steerage. Would it have been different if he had tried earlier and started right? Or was it simply fate? He could not tell. He accepted the fact in good faith; but he stuck to his beard. Fortunately, he could read. He could do various things creditably enough if some one put them before him. When he accepted the offer of a subordinate position with the Economy Publishing Company, he was twenty-seven. It was time to begin making a definite place for himself, such as it should be, — hewing wood or hauling water. Chicago repelled him. He made no attempt for a better footing. He felt singularly cut off and isolated, as though he had stepped outside the whole body of things in which his convention lay. Still, in a way, he rather enjoyed it. He even avoided the Art Institute. He had an indefinite idea, which rather pleased him, of making his interest in life that of a free, irresponsible observer and experimenter. Maybe, after all, it was as well to sit in a park, and watch the leaves and the people, or to look at the ice piling up in the harbor, as to make pictures or view them. It occurred to him that Eva Soden fitted in well enough with this theory of an art in life; with the plan of a young man who wished vaguely to find enthralling interests ready made to his hand and without moving out of his tracks. Yet he could not talk to her a minute without feeling that after all she did not fit in with it; that, in sober fact, she was simply a conventional young woman like any other; only her conventions were rather different.

It was with this sense that he came away from the restaurant, that though he met her in a Cobb's Café, and on the street corner, still his acquaintance would proceed essentially the same as though he rang a doorbell and handed his card to a liveried footman. There was nothing Bohemian about it except the scenery.

It was a foolish adventure. He told himself so as he turned in at the Arnold Building to go up to his desk, and again as he sat at the solitary dinner in the Randolph Street restaurant, where the friendliness of the waiter hardly compensated him for the cracked plate and the ragged napkin. He had to be very economical at times because he had to be prodigal at others. This particular week, he was striking the balance after a course of dinners at an expensive hotel. His lodging, near Lincoln Park, belonged to the prodigal side. Standing by the window in a kind of arrested discontent, looking out at the dark stretch of park, where here and there an electric lamp blazed its dead white through gaunt, stripped tree limbs, he wondered, inconsequentially, if it would n't be better to give up the pretentious, well-furnished lodging and go over to some west side boarding-house, where he could live for about five dollars a week. It seemed to him that he kept to a false position.

The third day, without any premeditation, without even telling himself what he was about, he again visited Cobb's Café; and after that, going there got to be much easier than staying away. Sometimes he did not see her at all, but usually

she was at her desk, and there was a conversation of ten seconds or five minutes. He had a certain capacity for brightness, and he consciously labored with it for her entertainment. He found her always with that effect of frank, good-natured sociability, and of a sort of sound, wholesome reasonableness, as though she were capable all around of meeting things as they were. She had a certain brightness of her own, which lay mostly in the way of doing justice to his jokes. Of course she was handsome. He put it on the footing of a social interest. A man who had no formal acquaintanceships might very well, and very reasonably, take his society over a counter, as he could find it. In that light he could make the affair look comfortably commonplace — sometimes.

Hurrying from the Arnold Building at five minutes to eleven, he put up his umbrella, for a cold drizzle of February rain was falling. It was a miserable day, so dismally dark that lights gleamed in half the windows. A wind came off the icy lake, driving the thin, pitiless lines of rain and sweeping the gloomy streets. In his great haste Philip had not stopped to button his overcoat or draw on his gloves. His bare hand fumbled at the coat collar as he hurried on, fastening it and turning it up about his neck. He had decided not to go that day. He did not admit even now that he was going. His mind was in a tumult. Everything was so bleak. How unhappy he was! That thought came to him definitely. Why must he be so unhappy? What had he done? He reached

the corner of Adams Street. He must turn, if he were going to Cobb's Café. He simply stopped in the lee of a building which protected him a little from the rain. The tumult continued in his mind; the acute unhappiness and the definite consciousness of it. But there was no control or direction in his thoughts. He could not even think what he was going to do. He looked up at the elevated road. If a south side train came by first, he would go to the restaurant; if it was a west side train, he would not. He remembered that there were more west side trains than south side; but he could not change the decision although he seemed to try to. He could not make his thought say: "If a west side train comes first, I will go." It was as though the machinery of his mind had fallen all to pieces. He stood staring up at the road, helplessly awaiting the turn of chance. Yet even in that moment a deeper consciousness, like a steady compass in a storm, said to him distinctly: "You are a big fool; you are a big baby, crying for a pretty face." But this under voice could not get near to the things that were ruling his acts. He saw, the moment the first car appeared, that it was a west side train. Well, he told himself, with a kind of relief, there were more west side trains any way. He stood still a moment in the full consciousness that he was going to the restaurant, and it seemed as though that was quite the way he had intended it from the first. The rain was increasing. He got a passing cab, on a burning impulse to hurry. It was a real satisfaction to him to give the driver

the direction in a clear, decisive way. He shut himself in the vehicle, and the formless tumult in his mind began rushing out to what was before him. His heart beat up. "Yes, you are a big baby," he was told again; but he could not care.

When he entered the restaurant, Eva was standing about halfway between the cashier's desk and the cafetera counter, looking back at the door, at him, over her shoulder. It occurred to him vaguely that her attitude was one of arrest. What occurred to him more definitely was that she was about to get her own luncheon, which she ate early, before the rush of business began. Even this was only a speck on the surface. He looked at her, and in that meeting of their eyes a strange, deep sense rushed up, as though in that moment for the first time these two stood squarely face to face, deeply questioning each other, saying, "I do not know you. Why do you knock at my door? What do you want of me?" In this flashing sense of strangeness, which was questioning and half hostile on both sides, lay their first intimacy. This was only a flash. Then it was coming home to Philip with a rush that, after all, her good nature, her ready friendliness, her good sense, her good looks, were only the incidentals of something else; that what drew him to her was a kind of thorough, sweet wholesomeness, a kind of brave, sound capacity for living, which would cure his sickness and keep him well and happy.

Although there had been a certain social circumspection, a kind of polite, personal distance in

all that had passed between them theretofore, Philip now walked up to her.

"You 're getting your luncheon," he said in a low voice; "won't you let me eat mine with you? I came all the way in the rain."

If Philip had not found her on certain days when he began coming to the restaurant with noticeable frequency, it was because she had slipped away to avoid him.

To avoid him was simply a stubborn instinct. It dumbly seemed to her that her good faith in respect of the revolt from her husband was involved in it. She could not tell just how, and she did not try to. The simple instinct was sufficient at first. To be sure, whole lines and battalions of other men came before her desk. A good many of them stopped a minute and tried their civility or their joke on her, and she did not mind that. The snub-nosed young man smoked in her face and took his loud-voiced liberties with an impervious assurance. But she did not mind that in the least. She could send back as good as he gave. When he called her a peach in the hearing of half the dining-room, she only laughed, without any offense. The sheer impudence amused her; and she could hardly be called a timorous woman. But when this other man stood beside her desk, in a kind of deferential, docile helplessness, looking down at her out of his brown eyes and speaking some well-bred pleasantry, his very modesty seemed to be saying something far different, far more disquieting, than the snub-nosed young man could ever possibly say

with all his impudence. Sometimes when she saw him coming, or when she only feared that he was coming, she left Tillie in charge of the desk and went off into the kitchen.

On this day she had started to get her lunch. The cold rain washed the stone flagging, dripped from the bedizened brass canopy, and splashed on the marble steps. Tillie, the dark-eyed slip of a girl who gave out the checks at the door, leaned against the cashier's stand and looked up into the rain, dreaming something, she did not know what.

"My gracious!" she called to Eva; "your felleh 's come in a cab! He 's just getting out of it up there!"

The impulse to fly got no further than a mere preliminary flash in Eva's brain. She stopped abruptly, waiting, looking back over her shoulder.

Tillie's part was easy enough reading,—the piping, excited eagerness of her childish voice; the deep, quick look of her dark eyes shining at Eva; the romance, painfully smouldering in her heart under the smother of the dismal day, abruptly touched up to a full glow; her own eagerness to be loved making its innocent, involuntary confession to the love affair of a grown woman. The woman felt this from the child, and it had the effect of bringing the man home to her in a kind of primal innocence and simplicity. It was confusedly among her emotions that she might say to him: "Do not think of me any more; I am married already." The corporeal man who came toward her from the door had an odd appearance of being

some way strange and different. For an instant she was asking him, "Who are you?" Then he was beside her, asking her if he could eat lunch with her. There was no notion of resistance or defensiveness in her mind.

"Yes," she said simply.

VIII

THAT "yes" murmured in her mind long after the little lunch was eaten. It seemed to put the man definitely beside her where she had determined no man should be. But what could one do? Marvin kept on coming to the restaurant, in that large, amiable, impractical way of his. One could n't help a man's coming to the restaurant. Besides, what could be more commonplace than that?

Dinner was over. The kitchen properties were neatly packed in the Sarcophagus.

"Shall we take a walk? Or go for a street-car ride?" Eva suggested.

"Do you wish to?" Sarah asked.

"Why — yes. I 'd like to get out of doors. That is" — she hesitated — "if you don't mind."

"Well, I do mind," said Sarah, with sudden decisiveness, laughing, however. "What you trying to do, any way? Train for a walking match? Or raise the dividends of the street-car company? You must shut off this tendency to gad around evenings. It 's been growing on you fearfully of late. It is n't becoming in the head of a family. It will break up our happy little home. You 'll be joining a lodge next. Let 's go sit on the steps."

Eva seemed to have something further to say.

"We can't be away from home all the time, you know," said Sarah, still joking.

Eva found an unexpected conviction in the words. She perceived suddenly that one could not always be dodging. There was a sudden inarticulate sense of the inevitable, which must be met calmly.

"We 'll be in style if we sit on the front steps," she said lightly; but instead of offering to go downstairs, she sat by the open bay window. Sarah came over and took the chair on the other side of the window.

Spring had come on with a rush. It was dusk, and bicycle time. The ting-a-ling of the bells and the flash of the lamps kept West Boulevard alive. The willow-trees were beginning to bud, and the old-fashioned high front steps on both sides of the street had blossomed full of people. The boarding-house contingents were taking the air there and being sociable. Some of the men sat in their shirt-sleeves and smoked pipes. Young-man-less girls walked up and down in twos and threes and fours, their arms around one another's waists. The bicycles were often in pairs, close together, and if the man had his hand on the girl's waist, the people on the steps laughed and sometimes edged a little closer together. The mellow air seemed prescient of the couples strolling in Union Park or rowing on the little lagoon, where a boatload of girls sang sentimental songs courageously in spite of the crowd and the unsentimental advice shouted to them by fellows in other boats. Only the steps to the Tomb

were empty, the landlady being busy in the kitchen, the landlord asleep on the front room sofa, the two divinity students of the second floor back trying to study, and Eva and Sarah at their open window.

These couples, strolling, bicycling, sitting close together in the dusk, mellow air, made a vague effect in Eva's mind. This mating, this drawing together of the chance human atoms, how it played in the warp of life! The vague effect inscrutably shocked her. How could one escape it?

A couple loitered by, saw the steps going to waste, and took possession by their everlasting and inalienable right. A tall young man came slowly down the street, peering doubtfully at the obscure house numbers in the dusk. He made the couple a little bow, bareheaded, asked what number that was, and bowed again to the young lady as she pulled her skirts aside to let him pass. The young lady giggled, and in the giggling snuggled a little closer to her companion, whispering, — meaning the bows, — "Would n't that frost you!" She then sat up very demurely, as the doorbell jingled dismally in the cavernous depths of the house. Upstairs Mrs. Eva Soden, by the open window, arose, her heart beating hard at the base of her throat, saying in a steady voice: —

"I guess we 're going to have company."

She did not try to light the gas. For a strange, panicky instant she lost confidence in her strong hands. Sarah looked at her, surprised; heard the knock at the door; heard the bass voice say ner-

vously, "Good-evening. You see I did find the place;" and recognized the voice, in a queer flash, for Philip Marvin's.

The tall young man came into the dim room. Eva said, in a low voice: "You know Miss White."

Perhaps the dimness was fortunate. But Sarah had her own social capability. When the gas was lighted and Philip handed over the book which he had asked leave to bring, all became outwardly at once quite a matter of course; quite commonplace, — the most ordinary affair of a call.

Yet Philip, as he sat against the wall, keeping up the talk with Sarah, was full of a queer, thrilling sense of the room. There was the curtained alcove, where he supposed they slept. There was the strange Sarcophagus, the high, dim gilt mirror, the tarnished chandelier, the worn boarding-house furniture. He was acutely alive to these shabby things. This, finally, was where she lived. This was what she was. It had all the zest of an adventure. He had wondered about that absolutely unknown environment into which she disappeared when she left the restaurant. Even his assurance that there was no husband in that unknown region rested upon nothing more tangible than his feeling about it. Now, here she was — with Sarah. His emotion paid a certain obeisance to the shabby room in which the two working-women made themselves a home. It was so much finer and braver, some way, than his imagining that he was grateful to her over again. Sarah, at least, had her polite curiosity about him.

"Yes," he said to her, "I live on the north side, up by Lincoln Park. It 's a very comfortable sort of place, and I suppose that 's what makes it so dismal. I 've always had it in mind to change. I wish for a loaf of bread and a jug of wine underneath a bough, — something so simple and lonesome that it will be a kind of company for me and make me feel snugly at home. One would n't like to live in the wilderness in a Pullman car, with hot and cold water, electric lights, and a pretty valance on his brass bed, especially when it costs more than he can afford."

"But what 's the use of having it a wilderness?" Sarah objected.

"Of course, there is no use" —

While he talked to Sarah, the undercurrents of his consciousness were thrillingly busy with this other woman, who sat over by the window, in an odd effect of keeping a little aloof from them, of resigning the affair wholly to Sarah, saying little, her hands resting in her lap. Suddenly he began addressing himself to her, although he kept the light tone and looked at Sarah. "There 's no use of its being a wilderness. That 's my objection. It might as well be something else. Or I might as well be something else, if you prefer it that way. What 's the use of knowing nobody? If Mrs. Soden had n't let me talk to her a little now and then, I should have become tongue-tied."

"Oh, yes. Eva 's good to cure tongue-tied people!" said Sarah quickly.

The subtle touch of constraint, of embarrassment,

which had come to Philip and to Eva when he spoke to her and looked directly at her, passed away in the laugh over Sarah's joke. Laughing, they looked at each other.

"I 'll see that you don't forget how to talk!" said Eva. At once each was aware that some inexplicable communication had passed between them; and Philip knew that he was free to come again. He began to tell them about his sociable waiter, of the cracked dishes, in sheer irresponsible happiness. Eva was fairly in the conversation now, laughing readily, her eyes shining — over the jokes, perhaps. Of a sudden it was so easy to be gay!

Philip arose to go, in that gay air. It was like the breaking up of a happy party. At the hall door he had a last glimpse of Eva standing beside Sarah, both laughing. When he went out, the courting couple were still on the front steps.

Upstairs a silence fell after Philip left. Sarah in a manner accentuated the silence by going to the table and picking up a book, — not the one which Marvin had brought. Eva returned to her seat by the window. The irresponsible happiness seemed to have been turned off.

"I ought n't to have let him come out here, Sarah, without asking you," she began. "I did n't really let him come here. I did n't want him to come, — but I guess I knew he was coming. It was n't doing right by you to give him a chance to come without telling you. But some way there did n't seem anything to tell. He got the address

because he said he was going to send out some books. Then he said he 'd bring the books. I told him it would be easier to leave them at the restaurant. But — I guess I knew he 'd come. He 's been coming to the restaurant for a good while." She paused and looked into her lap.

"I 'm sure I don't mind his coming here, if you don't," said Sarah, with doubtful magnanimity.

"It is n't what I mind," said Eva; "that don't seem to count. He 'd come to the restaurant any way."

Sarah definitely dropped her book. She looked over at the figure by the window. Again the potentialities of love stirred her heart.

"Why don't you let him come here?" she suggested. "He seems a nice fellow."

"Yes, I think he 's a nice fellow," said Eva quickly, with a touch of warmth.

"He 's a well-educated man," Sarah went on, following her own thought. "I don't think he knows much about business. I mean he 's sort of impractical. I know Mr. Arnold thinks well of him. Dr. Parsons has been away half the time lately. The old man is about used up, I guess; and Marvin practically does all the work. He 's capable enough."

Eva was silent. She perceived vaguely whither this tended, and the perception was painful. "Well, it does n't seem to matter what I want or don't want," she said. "Of course there 's never been really anything to tell, and there is n't anything now. You can see that. He just comes. I

suppose — if anybody 's going to come you can't really help it. He 'll come one way or another. You 've got to meet it one way or another."

"He seems a nice fellow," Sarah suggested with irrelevant speculation. "I like his eyes — and his beard."

Eva had nothing to offer on this head.

There was a little silence. "After all," Sarah mused idly, — and there was a little catch in her breath, her bosom swelled, — "a husband, children, — after all, I suppose that 's what a woman is for."

Her musing voice seemed to vibrate in the room after the sound of it had ceased. Eva's breath fluttered in a noiseless sigh. Her bosom swelled. In some inscrutable and elemental way she felt herself designed to love, to cherish her own, to bear children, and out of the same inscrutable, elemental feeling she had a sense of herself already caught in the coil of this affair, which must play itself out; which, whether she saw Marvin or refused to see him, or whatever she did, would still be the same affair playing itself out.

IX

Going to the Tomb at once became as easy as going to the restaurant had been. Nowadays Philip asked himself no questions. He would not inquire what he was doing or what he meant. He must pursue his happiness. After his dreariness, after his desert of doubts, it was blessed enough simply to flow unresistingly on in the stream of his desire. It was easy to bring up her image, lovely to the eye, subtly warming one's heart, putting a delicious glow in one's mind. On certain evenings, to take the street car, to glide through the spreading town toward one's romance, to travel a square of shabby, populous boarding-houses, to ring at the amusing, peeled funereal door with its urns, to find her before one, as lovely to the eye as one had dreamed, — while one could work this miracle over and over, why should one think of anything else?

Part of the charm arose from his sense of complete isolation, giving the investiture of romance, as though he found her on a desert island. Finding her among these front-doorstep neighbors of the Row, in respect of whom he could not feel himself in the least responsible, was like finding her alone, like having her all to himself.

The willow-trees along the curb were in the spring finery of their new, small, light green leaves.

The front steps up and down Boarding-House Row were well peopled. Children were playing in the road and over the sidewalks. The clanging gongs of the cable cars on Madison Street and the occasional rush of an elevated train had a gay suggestion. Now and then an open, brilliantly lighted trolley car cut across the dusk vista of the street some distance to the west, with the suggestion of a festival on wheels. Eva and Sarah sat at opposite ends of the top steps. Philip stretched his big limbs halfway down; but on that side which gave him the best chance to look up at Eva.

"The street looks like a party," he said, for all the front steps were occupied.

"You see a young woman's social position depends upon the number of young men who sit on the steps with her," said Sarah. "We 'd stand higher, if Eva did n't waste so much energy. All she 's done lately is to pursue the two poor divinity students who have the room back of us, and who never will come down to the steps and be shown off. Of course it 's practice in a way. But they 're such poor game! The other evening, you know, the fattest student knocked at the door and wanted to borrow a drawing of tea. The thinnest student had a headache. Well, Eva made a pot of tea, and got a jug of ice water and a napkin to put on the invalid's head. It was pitiful to see how the fat one tried to head her off. I suppose it was a good deal like the Chinese with their wooden spears and incantations in front of a battery of machine-guns. She carried it all with a swoop. The poor

fellow even opened their door for her. When the thin one was able to be up, he tottered to our room and made his submission."

Marvin was smiling a little, mechanically; but his eyes were upon Eva. She was looking down, smiling a little, mechanically.

"You know it was n't like that," she declared. "He just came to bring back the pitcher."

Sarah looked up the street. "Is that why he called you 'Sister Soden'? Is returning one's pitcher something Presbyterian?" she asked.

"I had talked with him a little about the church, I guess," said Eva, "after I 'd talked about everything else I could think of. He knows I 'm not a member. I suppose he called me 'Sister Soden' because he could n't think of anything else to call me. They 're poor and lonesome. People like that appreciate something friendly, I think."

"Yes, indeed, Sister Soden!" said Philip quickly, trying, not very successfully, to laugh.

Her calm eyes rested upon him, and he saw that the venture had failed. There was this in her presence, too, — the effect of a firm will, of a sort of plain wholesomeness, of a practical courage. Here the dream had always to stop. She permitted him to come only so near.

They were not confined to the front steps. There were strolls, little street-car excursions to the parks, even the dissipation of ice cream, — all the cheaper resources of a clerkly courting. Philip soon discovered in Eva a strange reluctance to any outlay of money on his part for her entertainment.

He did not know what understanding the two women had, or if they had any ; but Sarah was always of the party.

In the edge of a Sunday evening, sauntering from Lincoln Park, they leaned on the sea-wall, looking across the lake, which gleamed and twinkled to the far, pale, cloudy horizon. Sarah was still leaning on the wall when Eva and Philip found seats on a bench, facing the drive. It was not often that he had her to himself even so much as this. Stylish equipages rolled along the wide, parked drive, on the other side of which the spacious, costly dwellings faced them. A very high cart swung up to the curb before one of the big houses. A groom ran out to the horses' heads. The man and woman alighted from the cart and walked up to the house. As they ascended the steps, a man in evening dress flung open a wing of the door and stood by deferentially while the master and mistress entered.

Eva gave a sigh. "My ! it don't seem right for some folks to have so much when others have so little," she murmured. Her eyes were still upon the big house before which the little drama had happened, and Marvin perceived that to her it was the glimpse of a mysterious world, beyond her experience, almost beyond her imagination. He understood that to her, as to hundreds of thousands like her, drawn in from the new West, Chicago was the great city, the Rome, the Paris, the metropolis, the biggest single expression of a life which still meant gaining one's bread from the soil, building,

however rudely, to make a habitation in the wilderness.

"Will you have your home like that, — porch, pillars, and all?" he asked lightly.

"Is n't it all right?" she asked seriously.

"Certainly, if you like it," he replied, laughing.

"I suppose I can't judge," she said gravely. "You know I grew up in a little town in Nebraska."

He warmed with the sense of being permitted to come a little closer to her. "Yes, I know that; but tell me something about it — your town," he said eagerly. "I 've never been west of Chicago," he added disingenuously, to make it less personal.

"It is like any other little town, — at least in the West, — I suppose," she said. Suddenly she began telling him about it, speaking straight on, without looking at him. "It 's all frame buildings except one store, where I clerked. It would seem poor enough to anybody riding through it on the train. I suppose it is poor enough. But it was about the only place I knew until I was married. I was married in that town, too, you know," she added, as though to suggest the whole range of the drama on that poor stage.

Marvin dug the end of his stick into the cinder path before them.

"Some way I can never think of you as having been married," he said.

In the pause he feared she was withdrawing from him; but after a moment she said, "Why?"

"You seem too young. You don't meet life like a person who had received a hurt from it."

"I suppose good health is something," she suggested. "I can't help being happy, if I have half a chance. I think about that sometimes. I guess being happy is a good deal the way you 're born, after all."

"And you were born happy!" said Philip quickly; and without a pause he added, "I could love you for being happy." The emotion seemed to be for himself rather than for her. The way she understood it was shown by her reply: —

"You ought to be happy, with your education and opportunities. My! it seems to me if I had your education, I would n't care for anything else."

"Well — I wish you had it," he said, with a laugh. He saw that he must not come back to the emotional ground. Nevertheless, he had been closer to her than ever before.

The clerkly adventure of a Sunday excursion across the lake was arranged with some difficulty. When the young ladies went the length of buying their own seventy-five cent tickets, Philip thought the ridiculousness could go no further. He was humiliated and rebuffed by it. He even suffered an acute shame as they went up to the wicket and laid down their coins, while other men were buying tickets for their girls. He suspected from the humorous twinkle in Sarah's pale eyes that this particular question of the proprieties had been the subject of a dispute between the friends. But he had to submit.

The boat was crowded with excursionists, mainly city clerks. Several couples were going across to be married. There were men whose wives and children were spending the heated term on the Michigan shore; but the majority was made up of young men and women taking their day's outing. At Saint Joseph they swarmed up the bluff, overflowed the tiny park in front of the hotels, and slowly dispersed as their interests led them. The verdant country rolled back invitingly from the wooded heights at the shore. Romance beckoned from the leafy knolls. But Eva liked the crowd. The three strolled along the parked crown of the bluff overlooking the beach, and found a shady bit of grass to sit on. The scene was animated in the way of a circus or a county fair. Crowds of people were swarming over the park and the sandy beach below,—especially about the long pine shed with the huge sign, "Bathing Pavilion." A brass band labored direly down there. Human figures in striped bathing-suits bobbed and splashed in the water under the glaring sun. Eva's interest seemed to centre in this spot, and she finally proposed that they get a nearer view. They toiled down the face of the bluff and across the stretch of burning sand. In the enormous shed, after standing awhile, they were so fortunate as to get seats, by crowding a little, on the end of a wooden bench, facing the dazzling water.

The long, bare shed was thronged with people, mostly very sociable young people. There was a rude wooden counter, where one could buy lemon-

ade, "pop," and candy. There were some bare pine tables where ice cream was served by sweaty and hurried waiters. The front of the shed was open to the lake. Another crowd of people, in rented bathing-suits, splashed and screamed in the water. The brass band was tireless and almost tuneless. The strong sun beat down upon the water, the sands of the beach, and the pine pavilion. It seemed to Philip as dismal and uncomfortable a place as one could well find. But he perceived that Eva enjoyed it; that to her the band, the splashing, screaming men and women, and even the lemonade were exactly what made a holiday. He supposed it was hereditary, an atavism of the countrywoman's passion for the county fair and the circus. Sarah was plainly not a victim to the atavism; but she stood the band and the sun with a perseverance which finally sent her back to the boat with a headache. On the return trip she kept to a sofa in the cabin, and Eva stayed by her side. Philip loitered unhappily in that crowded, noisy place, like a youngster who had been denied his holiday. He knew that it was childish to feel so keenly disappointed over so small a matter; but after all, he had missed his holiday. The thing had been a failure, beginning with the tickets. Presently he went lonesomely off to smoke. An hour later, he was sitting on the lowest deck smoking, when Eva abruptly appeared before him.

"So this is where you are!" she said. "I've been looking all over the boat for you."

She had had her way all day,—about buying her own tickets, about staying with the crowd when he wished to go into the woods. She knew well enough that he was subtly disappointed. Now she was coming to make it up to him. He felt that in a flash, with a quick flow of emotion. After all, what a good fellow she was, how frank, how companionable! He got up eagerly to find her a chair. She preferred standing for the moment, leaning against the bar which guarded the open port, as big as a barn door, by which Philip was sitting. They were so close to the water down there that the cool spray now and then came up in their faces. The long waves, tumbling back from the racing bow, were so near that they could almost reach down and touch them. It was different from a merely tempered air. They seemed to breathe in the living depths of the cool green lake. Beyond the commotion made by the ship, myriads of little waves showed twinkling faces of light in the moon's long path, and that illimitable repose out there was nearer to them than the rapid noises of the boat's machinery or the men who were loquaciously drinking beer at the dingy little bar behind them. Philip sat at the edge of the big door. Eva stood before him, leaning against the beam which guarded the port. In her sailor hat, shirt waist, and skirt she looked tall and strong as a young athlete. She stood up straight. Her hands, large for a woman, were clasped together, the wrists resting upon the bar. The wind moved her hair, combed up from her smooth white neck. The painter must have

his model. Here it was. The man's heart beat in an impassioned smother of adoration for this splendid figure. In his nerves he felt the vigor of her blood, the clean, beautiful lines of her body. In an odd moment it seemed to him that she might suddenly poise an instant, and lightly leap into the live, tumbling waves as her native element.

She turned to him, smiling a little. "I was never on a boat before in my life," she said.

The confession struck him with a momentary astonishment. An instant passed before he understood it; before there flashed to his mind anew that conception of the meagreness, the poverty of her life which at times had such power to surprise him, although he was now familiar with it.

"Well, one is much like another," he suggested lightly.

"Is it — this — really a good deal like the ocean?" she asked eagerly.

He began telling her as much as he could remember about an ocean steamer. She listened with a kind of eager, absorbed curiosity, asking now and then some simple question, such as how much it cost to travel that way; how the dinner was served. She took the chair which he had brought over and sat near him. He saw again that she put an immensely disproportioned value upon certain things, such as the ability to read French, a trip to Europe, a college education. He went on telling her about Paris, London, — talking, he knew well enough, much in the style of the country relative who has had his six weeks' personally conducted tour. But

it was these simple things that she wished to hear. In the grave composure of her face, in the glance from her eye, he saw the deference which she paid him for his supposed accomplishments, listening like an intelligent, docile child being taught. All that while, and after they went back to the cabin, in sub-currents and confusions of his thought, he kept contrasting her bodily splendor and her own good, simple, frank, amiable self. This perplexed his mind. Her beauty drew him on. Its strong lure imposed a kind of impassioned inertia upon his will, so that he would not think of anything except winning her. Then she was so good, so candid, so companionable. He felt a tenderness for her. He must do nothing whatever to harm her.

It was late at night when they reached Boarding-House Row. They were in the gayest spirits. Even Sarah, for all her headache, had caught the subtle infection. Nobody knew just how it had come about. As they were coming down from the cabin, the boat swung to the dock, rocked a little, slightly unsettling Eva's balance. She caught at the banister, but Philip seized her hand. They ran down the stairs, laughing, holding hands. As they jangled slowly cross-town in the owl car, she sat close beside him, finding everything to laugh at. A certain intimate effect of the voyage together, of the talk on the lower deck, — more than all, that touch of the hands, — had roused their emotions to a new power ; another atmosphere was about them, warm, delicious, full of a vague, enthralling promise.

Sarah went in first, unlocking the funereal front door.

"My! it's dark in here!" she called.

"Are you afraid of burglars?" said Philip. He could feel the pumping of his heart against his side. He stepped into the dark hall, Eva behind him.

"Well, I've nothing to burgle," he heard Sarah saying on the stairs.

There was the slight brush of a skirt against him in the dark. His hand touched her arm, — an accident in the dark.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night," her calmer voice answered from the stair.

He went out in a tumult of happiness. It had been the merest brushing by. Yet some way they had met, come together, blent in that instant in the dark. On the steps he looked up, astonished at the size and brilliance of the moon, at the immensity and beauty of the sky. There was no longer a doubt, a difference, an obstacle. Her beauty and her goodness were one. His desire of her and his tenderness for her were one. There was no good or bad for either apart from the other. He strolled slowly over to the street-car track, looking up.

X

The drooping leaves of the willow-trees on Boarding-House Row were motionless. The world itself, that night, seemed to hang still and hot, or with little stirs that were like a sinking down into the great midsummer passion. The big yellow moon in the southwestern sky appeared to be coming on to put the earth under a spell. This young couple awheel, going slowly, noiselessly by, without speech, seemed to know it, and to be silently gliding on to the irresistible enchantment. Walking through the small park, Marvin had seen half a dozen young women sitting on the grass with young men's heads in their laps, careless of curious eyes. Over here the world seemed slipping out of its vexing integument of clothes. If a man had a mate, he must call her.

At the Tomb he found Sarah lying down, a victim to her headache, and Eva sitting by the front window, looking out at the night, at the moon. Talk went poorly. Sarah was too miserable. Philip could say things, perhaps, but he scarcely cared to. The room was dark, for coolness' sake, and the light of the window showed the outline of a woman's head, a detail of throat, chin, brow, cheek. He was too full of her. The impassioned demand trembled to his lips. All the difficulties,

the dubieties, the conventions, seemed poor and trivial.

"For goodness' sake, go outdoors, you two," Sarah complained. "You get on my nerves. Take her for a walk. She 's stuck in here all day because I could n't go. Make her go."

"Yes; let 's go outside," said Philip, rising.

Eva was looking out of the window, and she did not move or reply. Marvin went over to her, put his hand on her chair. "Come," he said, "I want you to take a walk with me."

"Well," she said simply, still without looking at him. He did not step aside as she rose, the act bringing her so close that her arm brushed his sleeve. It was not in him to move aside then.

She got her straw hat, which, however, she carried in her hand, and they went down to the street. The front steps of the row were populous. Men lounged and sprawled over them, coatless, often collarless. Here and there one sat in his undershirt. Some had taken chairs to the tiny grass-plot between the sidewalk and the house-front. Toward the end of the row, a young machinist and his wife had the steps to themselves. The brawny young man, barefooted, in his undershirt and trousers, lay on the steps. The young woman sat beside him, in a sprawling attitude, her feet planted wide apart, her skirts pulled up from them, her flimsy dress open at the neck, showing her firm bosom. A blanket was spread on the bit of grass below them. On the blanket a baby rolled, half naked, its calico slip pulled up about its body,

baring its fat white legs. Eva paused an instant by the baby, looking down at it, then up at the mother, smiling with a woman's intelligence. She had said nothing to Philip except "It 's awfully hot, ain't it?" Philip himself did not wish to talk then. This half-dressed street, indifferent to spectators, owning the overpowering spell of the hot night, corresponded to a certain state in their own minds, as though the heat had melted out the filigree work, the more delicate, perishable, conventional, artificial things, and left life in a kind of elemental simplicity and nakedness. One could not bother with conventions, ornamentations, and refinements. The heat loosened one's grasp upon them, leaving one only the essential, the framework, to deal with. She knew well enough what was coming. She had thought of it since the Sunday night, four days before, when they returned from the lake trip. This night, as Philip stood beside her chair, demanding his chance to see her, she felt no power over the subtle defenses, the evasions, the excuses, the dodging and eluding. She could only meet the thing squarely, face to face. They walked on to the street-car track, scarcely saying a word. She had not asked where they were going. She did not care. Philip did not care either. He had thought of Garfield Park. One place was as good as another. A little incidental, spasmodic conversation sprang up in the breeze made by the motion of the car. Mostly, as they sat side by side, they looked silently at the night; at the moon rising higher and growing whiter in the southwestern

sky. Its light poured over the great flat plain of the city, thickly set with habitations. Here and there it silvered a roof, a spire, as with a touch of romance upon the vast, level, smoky huddle of houses.

They walked across the meadows of the park, their shadows, long and clear cut, moving over the thick grass, the clean, grateful smell of which came to their nostrils. They found a bench under a canopy of tall shrubbery, beside a winding roadway. An arc lamp behind them sent its strong rays through the treetops, laying a sharp black pattern of leafy shadows upon the roadway. But the shadow of the dense shrubbery fell over them, secluding them. Now and then people strolled by, or a flock of bicyclers flitted along the road, with tinkling bells and twinkling lights. These passing figures did not break the sense of their seclusion. Eva, at her end of the short rustic bench, dropped her straw hat between them. She leaned back, putting her elbow on the back of the bench, resting her cheek on her hand. The fine, free pose showed the graceful strength of her figure. It gave also a certain effect of fatigue; and Marvin noticed this first in that tenderness for her, that fond prescience of possession and protection, which was now in the color of every thought about her.

"You 're tired, are n't you?" he said. There was no attempt to conceal the fondness in his voice.

"I 'm a little worried about Sarah," said Eva. "She has n't been well lately. She don't seem to

get any better. She 's going away, to take a long rest."

"Ah!" In the deep stir of his emotion, Philip had scarcely heeded or understood the words about Sarah.

"Yes, Dr. Brown tells her she must. Of course it will be rather lonesome for me."

"No — for I want you to go with me. You know that I love you, Eva."

"You know that I 'm married already," she said, with a kind of weary patience, as though this question had been asked and answered a great many times between them.

He made a little gesture and gave his head a shake. "That does n't make any difference," he cut in impatiently. "I mean" — He steadied himself. "See, Eva, have n't I behaved well toward you so far? I 've tried to. I know you 're in an awkward position. I love you. You must know that. I want you. Nobody else can do me any good. I 've thought of you all the time. When I wake up, it makes my heart beat because there 's another day in which I can see you. But for all that, I 've tried to behave well, never asking anything that might embarrass you; just doing what you seemed to wish me to do. That may not be much; but there was never that much steadiness, that much good, in me before. You brought it to me. You must n't take it away. I said I would do just as you wished until by and by you would trust me, and we could sit down like two friends and talk it over and see what was best for

us to do. Have n't I — can't you take me on that ground now? "

" Oh, it is n't that," she said quickly. " It is n't that I don't trust you. You 've been nice to me, Philip! You 've always been nice to me! I know — sometimes " — She did not change her pose. Her face, with downcast eyes, shone white in the dusk. He felt her strong self-control at the same time that he perceived her strong emotion from her voice, from the rise and fall of her bosom. She struggled a moment with an obscure and difficult impulse. Something lay in her mind. Out of her one deep, bad experience, her early, slighter knowledge of some other young men, her rustic traditions of courtship, where love-making meant the grasp of a hand, an arm thrown out to embrace, a stolen kiss, an affair of bodily contact, she was immensely grateful to him for his restraint, his respect for her person. She had an odd humility respecting herself, and an odd pride respecting him, on account of it. " I could always be fond of you, because you 've been so nice to me. If you had n't been, it would have made me want to die." She saw his eyes shining at her. " But after that, there really is n't anything for us to talk over," she added, dropping back.

" There 's everything for us to talk over! Everything! " he declared. " You are fond of me. You said so."

" I like you, Philip," she answered finally, without looking up. " But I tell you I 'm married already."

"But that was a mistake, a misfortune you suffered. You 've paid for it. It 's past and gone. The future belongs to us — to you and me. You 're mine now. I claim my own!" He felt her so close to him, he had so acute a sense of being on the verge of possession, his emotion so outran his tongue, that almost before he knew what he was about, he stooped toward her, his arm reached along the back of the rustic seat, he took her hand.

"No! no!" she exclaimed. She freed her hand with a jerk, and pushed him back with violence. At once the act seemed so rude, so ill-mannered, that she repeated, "No!" in a quite different tone, pleadingly. For the first time in his knowledge of her he heard a helpless, distressed note in her voice. She stared over at him, distressed, as though she had struck him. "You must n't, Philip," she pleaded. "That is n't being nice. I can't talk to you at all" —

There was surprise and a subtle resentment in his mind, — at bottom, the wrath of the baffled male.

"I did n't know it was a crime — now — to the woman you love," he said.

"To a married woman," she said.

He made a gesture.

"I can't tell you," she began — "I can't even talk to you, don't you see" — She broke off, confused.

"What can't you tell me, Eva? I love you. You 've said you were fond of me? I don't understand."

"But don't you see" — Again she broke off. "I'm not a girl," she said steadily, facing him. "I'm a woman because I've been married. A woman can't ever go back and be a girl again, — as innocent, I mean. I was married when I was nineteen, and lived with my husband two years and a half. I thought I loved him when I married him. He was never quarrelsome, or stingy, or brutal, or drunk, around me. He was most always good-natured, and always generous enough to me with his money. I did most of the quarreling. He was a man that lied about everything. He could n't help it. He wanted a good time all the while, like a child; and he 'd have it any way he could. I could n't trust him at all. I left him for good cause. There were other women. I went back home. He 'd been like that all the time, — when I married him as much as any other time. After I got home, I thought of a divorce. The lawyer looked it up. I did n't know anything against him that would be ground for a divorce that I could prove in court. I knew it for myself, but not so I could prove it in court, unless I hunted around for witnesses. Even then, at first, when I was mad at him and bitter against him, I could n't have done that. It would have disgraced me. We had been husband and wife; and for me to go prying around to drag all that up before a court, — why, I might as well have published things like that about myself. This is n't nice stuff to tell you, Philip, but I want you to understand, now. At first the law seemed wrong and unjust, and I was bitter against

that, too. It is a poor little town where we live, out there in Nebraska, and we 're as poor as anybody. It was the worst time in my life while I stayed there. For a long time I could n't bring myself to go to work there, where I 'd grown up and married, and then come back without any husband. I knew people blamed me, because I could n't explain why I 'd left him. Then after a while it seemed to me that the law was all right. If I left him that way, I ought to be satisfied to let it stand as it was. It 's the only thing that seemed right. A divorce would make me free to marry again. Maybe I 'd be tempted to do it, if I was free. A woman is different from a man. My father ain't what you 'd call a religious man, I guess, for he don't always go to church. But we believe the Bible. He was the only friend I had in this, and we looked it up one night, because they talk about ' Bible grounds.' At first it don't say anything about a woman. It says a man can put away his wife. And I guess it was meant that way. Think of me, only twenty-four, with two men — living — Oh, you could n't make it right, Philip! Then I call myself a married woman. I am a married woman — as long as he lets me alone. If a married woman let you make love to her, she could n't be a good woman, could she? I want you to understand it all now. If I let you make love to me, and put your arms around me, and kiss me, I 'd get so I would n't care. Oh," — she gave way in a whirl of passionate rejection, — " I 'd as soon go to living with you right off! "

Even in the dusk he saw the deep color come over her face. She dropped back against the bench in a kind of despair. "There!" she exclaimed. "Oh, what did you want me for, any way? What horrid things I say to you! It ain't nice! I ought n't ever to have let you see me at all! I ain't nice! Something horrid happened to me, and it 's in my mind. It 's too bad for you if you love me. But don't make it any harder for me. You" — Her voice broke. She put up her hand to hide a blur of tears.

The helpless note made its irresistible appeal. His fondness, his sense of protection, came strongly up. He felt an immense tenderness for her. His emotion swept him up to unselfish heights.

"Yes, yes! I understand! Forgive me! Don't — don't take it so hard, dear! Forgive me for having caused you pain! Whatever you wish I will do. I wish only to help you! Anything, anything you like, I will do! I will ask nothing for myself!" In the excess of his emotion, he reached out and took her hand. "Don't, don't cry, dear! You break my heart! It was I who came your way and made you unhappy. How selfish I 've been! I 've made you unhappy!"

"No, I was to blame. I ought n't to have let you come. I blame myself, not you," she said eagerly. Infected by his emotion, responding to his tenderness, his generosity, his solicitude, she bent slightly toward him, smiling a little. "Don't think I blame you." She put her other hand over his hand, holding it between her palms. "You 've

always been nice to me, Philip, and it 's made me happy, even if it ought n't to. I want you to know that."

Nothing was too much to say, to confess. The spirit of each leaned to the other in that immense tenderness, in a competition of generosity, eager to acknowledge the other. To each of them in that moment the spirit as well as the person of the other seemed supremely lovely. The atmosphere was exalted and rarefied with an indescribable purity. No heights were impracticable to them.

"You are so much better than I, Eva," the man murmured; "so much firmer and surer. I submit to you. In everything I submit to you. Only, I must see you now and then,—a friend, waiting not far off, whom you can call upon. I must feel myself not far off from you, or it would be too utterly desolate. You don't know how lonely everything seems away from you. Ah, I needed you, dear!"

His words and tone struck a new, deep chord,—this big fellow, with his big limbs and hands, and his good, bearded face, who still had the effect of a certain appealing helplessness,—her big boy, whom she could mother and comfort. She wished nothing but to give herself to him; and this bar which stood in the way seemed immensely tragic.

Her voice shook as she said, "It 's too bad, Philip."

The tragedy stood out before them. In that immense tenderness, that atmosphere of indescribable purity, on that sacrificial height, they were about to part. To Philip it seemed like parting with life,

like the wrenching away of all hope. The drawn lines of his face, the puckering about his wounded eyes, showed the labor of his mind. He bent toward her, holding her hand tight, his hand against her shoulder. She drew away a little.

"Ah, once!" he murmured, and drew her, unresisting, toward him. His lips touched her cheek. With a sudden, passionate flooding of the will, she slipped full into his embrace, her head against his shoulder, his cheek against her brow. For a moment she could not care for anything else. In a swoon of the mind she knew that he held her close and kissed her lips. She attempted to rise, but felt the compulsion of his arms. She gathered herself with a great effort, freed herself abruptly, and stood up.

"Ah! There! There!" she panted, as though the torment was too much. "You see! The very thing happens that we said should n't happen! that I said should n't happen! I don't care if you kissed me!" she whirled on, in her impassioned tumult. "I won't care! But you see how it is. We can't be trusted. I can't trust you now. And I won't have it happen again! I won't be made ashamed!"

Philip sat on the bench, half bewildered, subtly ashamed, yet stupidly resentful. He gnawed his mustache without looking at her, too confused by her passion and his own to know what to say, but dimly perceiving that she was right; that they were not to be trusted; that even at their finest and highest and purest, when they seemed to love

each other most tenderly and unselfishly, to be ready to sacrifice everything for each other, — even then, the blind, elemental forces within them betrayed them, drawing them bodily together, pushing them against each other. Eva picked up her hat and put it on. He still felt the atmosphere of her passion, although he subtly felt that she was controlling it.

"You see," she repeated more calmly, "it would be just this way over again, if we went on. There 's only one right way for us. It 's been all good between us up to now. We must n't have it turn bad, — drag off into something miserable. So I want you to sit right here until I 'm gone. Don't come with me. We must have courage to do what is right. You would n't have me ashamed, or sorry that I 'd known you. So sit right here. I love you, dear." She put her hands on his shoulders. He looked up at her, not daring to touch her. "You 've been good to me, and I love you." She stooped and kissed his forehead. "Good-by."

Philip sat on the bench, overwhelmed, in a stagnation of helpless misery. He watched her tall, strong figure going down the dim roadway. He wished at least to follow her at some distance, to see that she got safely home. But he could not. He seemed buried in a wreck, which was made of the pieces of his own mind.

XI

The letter which finally Philip could not forbear to write reached Eva the day after he left for Massachusetts, and the second day after Sarah's departure for her long rest in Indiana.

He had not lived up to his tragedy. He had been too miserable. The very Tuesday following the Sunday, he went to the restaurant to see her, and again on Thursday; and Sunday afternoon he presented himself at the Tomb, where he found Sarah in bed and Dr. Brown in attendance. He had the shame of his feeble and futile persistence, of this pitifully mendicant effect of loitering helplessly by the shut gate of his paradise. In the end, nothing moved her. He felt himself in a blind alley, walled by her firm will. She took his feeble persistence rather sadly. Suddenly, in despair, colored by a vague resentment, he gave it all up. He resolved to go home for a visit — perhaps forever. He thought of throwing up his place in the publishing house, of never coming back. He suggested this in the letter, with an effect of forgiving her.

She read only his unhappiness in the letter, as she had read only that in his troubled eyes when he hung futilely about her in the restaurant; when, in the Tomb, he looked over at her while she sat

on the foot of the bed by Sarah, and would not come to him.

It was lonesome in the empty front room, with Sarah gone, and with that letter in her hands. He would finally form his view of her from her stubbornness. He would finally think her ungenerous, incapable of loving. Finally he would marry some other woman, while she could go on to old age, loveless, manless, childless. Her heart swelled up with a hot and bitter pain. Yes, now that he was safely away, she could muffle herself in secure loneliness and call out to him to come back to her.

It was lonesome in the front room. She got out her savings bank book. No amount of arithmetic could make the amount more than twenty dollars, and it would cost thirty, at least, to go to Nebraska and back.

It was lonesome, but she had her capacity for living. She bettered her acquaintance with the divinity students. The coatless and loquacious landlord made informal calls, and enjoyed the lazy hum of his own gossip, unrestrained by Sarah's biting brightness. Even the solemn landlady sociably unbent in some confidential chats respecting her bodily ills. Above all there was the restaurant, where there was plenty to do the greater part of the day. She had pleasure in her work ; the keenest interest in the success of Mr. Cobb's mammoth feeding-house, with which she thoroughly identified herself. She was the least languishing of young ladies. Occasionally, she wondered whence came this pleasure in living, which persisted in spite of

her sad experiences. Her heart might swell and ache overnight; but some hours later, out in the street, on her way to the restaurant, if it were a fine morning, she could not help turning her face to the new day with a certain bright, confident interest. Sometimes, in her walk, a fine joy came up quite irresponsibly and mysterious; joy over nothing in particular, as though she had drawn it out of the warm ground and the hot summer air, a florescence of her strong, clean blood.

Besides the army of city clerks who were to the manner of the cafetera born, the restaurant occasionally drew strangers, whom its arrangements baffled. Early in August, there entered a slim man, whose gray sack coat and trousers came indubitably out of a country clothing store. He wore a black slouch hat, and carried a large brown bag. The lean, bony wrist of the hand that clutched the bag protruded a good way from the coat sleeve. He took off his hat as Tillie proffered a check, and looked about uncertainly. His mild, baffled eye at last mutely questioned the girl, and she, knowing his kind, explained that he could sit on a stool by the lunch counter, or serve himself at the cafetera, or go over to one of the covered tables and be served. He chose the covered table as the simplest, and declined Tillie's offer to have his bag checked in the office, apparently with the suspicion of a charge.

It was only after he had been sitting some moments at the table, with his unmistakable, self-conscious air of a countryman, that Eva saw him,

stared again, slipped from her stool, and hurried to him, exclaiming, "Why, Ernest!"

The restaurant was still almost empty. She sat down at the corner of the table, pulling her chair up and tilting it forward to be closer to him, asking him eagerly how long it was since he left Hopeville, how his folks were, how the store was getting on, how long he meant to stay. She saw at once that the patch of gray over his temple was getting larger. There were many fine little lines in his colorless face. It came to her quite abruptly that this man, who had long been in her thought as young, was verging to middle age. From this and the long, bony wrists protruding from his cuffless sleeves and his clothes, she saw him as from a new point of view, as though something had passed between them and sharply separated her condition from his, leaving him rustic, and indefinably in the rear. She had talked so fast, piling up so many questions about Hopeville, excitedly overflowing, running away with interest and curiosity in it, that she had scarcely heard some of his replies; had barely considered the man himself. Now, he came personally before her, with his aging, rather way-worn, rather shabby effect, and her strong affection went out to him. He had been her first real lover. There had been that futile engagement between them. All that seemed now so far away. But it came to her just then, amid some curiously confused flashes of other experiences, that she owed this man much. She knew now how young and helpless she had been then. And this aging man,

with his behind-hand effect, — how nice he had been to her! How gently and considerately he had treated her! How clean and free she had come out of his hands! If anybody had been hurt, it was Ernest.

"I did n't expect to find you here," he was saying.

"Oh, yes. I 've been here eight — nine months. But you did n't say how long you were going to stay."

"Why," — his eyes dropped to his plate in a troubled way, — "I don't know 's I 'll go back to Hopeville."

"Not go back!" She was astonished. He seemed as much a part of Sears's store, which he had managed so long, as the very bricks and counters. She vaguely guessed a catastrophe, and tipped her chair farther forward. "What 's happened, Ernest?" she asked, determined that he should not draw away from her; that he must treat her as a sister.

The waitress came up with the roast beef and coffee. Thompson nervously fingered his knife and fork, looking down, while she served him. When she went away, he looked up at Eva with a little, humble mellowing of the eye.

"Well, you know Jennie Sears's husband," he said. "Let 's see, she was married before you came away last fall, was n't she? Her husband had been in the grain business over at Elder, and had kind of busted up at it, I guess. Any way, he came into the store just about the time you left. He 's busi-

ness-like enough, I guess, and he 's been there long enough to get an insight into the store. I don't think Tom meant favoritism so much — 't wa'n't that exactly. But I 've been in the store nineteen years last January, and of course I 've sort of had the run of things, and signed for the house, and all that. Well, Tom took Harding in partner last April. That 's natural enough, too, I suppose, for his own daughter's husband, and as Jennie 's the only child, she 'll have it all in time any way, so it was all right enough to give her husband a share in the business now. Well, Harding is looking at it from his own standpoint. I guess he means to be fair enough in his way, and Tom 's getting pretty well along in years. He don't come down to the store much any more. Harding wants to make the business pay all he can. And of course I 'm just a clerk to him, 's though I came in there yesterday. Harding took over the management of everything. First he discharged Pete, and that left the sweeping out and building the fires and scrubbing up and so on to me. I 'd been getting nine hundred dollars a year, you know, for fifteen years. Of course that 's pretty good wages for Hopeville. Well, Harding thought fifty a month was enough, as trade had been sort of slack this spring and summer. Of course I don't blame Harding especially, and there was n't any words between us. But a man don't like to be put back, 'specially there in Hopeville, where I knew everybody and everybody knew all about it. I ought to have saved more money, I guess. But I 've had mother all

the time, and maybe we 've lived rather better 'n we ought. You see, I 've put about twelve hundred dollars in our home. I suppose I might have gone to Tom. I 've been with him nineteen years, and there was n't ever a word between us. He 's sort of hard in some ways ; but he 's fair, too. But I did n't like to go to him. I 'm forty now. Well, I thought I 'd run in here to Chicago and see what I could find to do." The knife in his lean hand rattled a little against the plate. " I 've had a pretty good experience," he went on, with an anxious note which he tried in vain to conceal, " and of course Tom and other people there will give me good reference. Seems like I could find something here. I 'm glad I found you anyhow," — he pulled away from the business topic with an evident effort, — " because it seemed kind of lonesome."

Eva stared over at him. She wished to cry, " Oh, dear Ernest, don't come here ! You are too old. These men will care nothing for your village experience. They will treat you like a tramp when you ask for work. It will break your heart. Go back ! " But to what ? This wiping out of his long, faithful service, setting him adrift to try himself in the big, new, careless city seemed inexpressibly cruel to her. She would have liked to catch him in her arms, to hug him away from the cruelty, to make him feel the compassion, the affection, the will to help which moved her so strongly. She turned at once to the practical side.

" You have n't got any place to stay ? any

hotel?" she asked quickly. "I 'll tell you, I think I can find you a place in a boarding-house out near where I live. It will be lots cheaper than any hotel. There 's no use your paying eight or ten dollars a week when you can get along for four or five. Why don't you leave your grip here and look around to-day a little, then come back here at half past three or four, or whenever you like. I 'll wait for you, and we 'll look up the boarding-house."

"Well, I 'd like that," said Thompson. "Anyhow," he added cheerfully, "I 'd like to be near you for company."

How well she would like him to be near her! She felt a kind of motherly capability in respect of him which oddly reversed their first relationship. This man, whimsically inexperienced in some ways,—how good he had been to her when she was only a girl!

They found the boarding-house three doors from the Tomb, where Thompson was given a small back bedroom, with two meals a day, for five dollars a week. In the morning, Eva took him down town, and started him toward the wholesale grocery house where he knew one of the junior partners (formerly a drummer) and hoped to find a job, — possibly, although he did not whisper it to Eva, a job "traveling on the road," for he still had the countryman's idea of the drummer as a privileged being, continually traveling about from town to town, staying at the best hotels, prodigally ordering cabs, seeing everything, knowing everybody. In the afternoon, Eva sat on the steps

until he should come by, fully sympathizing with him, anxious to hear what his luck had been. Thompson came by late, weary, depressed. His grocer was out of town. He had tried another partner without success. Then he had been to three other houses. Already he felt the city's stony front; its busy, curt indifference to the man seeking work.

The next day and the next, it was the same thing. He tramped the streets, going from one wholesale house to another, sticking to this line because the names of dozens of these houses were familiar to him through his long experience at Hopeville, and beyond these familiar names the city was a vast, formless, unimaginable wilderness, as to which he felt himself utterly chartless and helpless. It was always about the same. In two or three houses he was so lucky as to find a drummer whom he knew. If the drummer introduced him, the managing partner or department chief regarded him as a human being, listened with some show of courtesy to his brief statement, regretted that there was no vacancy; even occasionally went so far as to cheeringly suggest that they might have something later on, — dismissed him with a nod, for other business was pressing. Sometimes another house where he might hope to find employment was suggested to him. If he went in unintroduced, he seemed usually to lose his human quality at once, to become generically simply a nuisance. He got a busy man's stare and decisive shake of the head, or a curt word of refusal, which

seemed not to be addressed to him personally, but to all the large, dim army that wanted work and annoyed busy people unreasonably by saying so. In some of the larger houses he got no further than an usher or office boy, who told him it would be useless to see Mr. So-and-So; the house wanted nobody. His self-respect was bruised and lacerated at every step. He had modestly thought of himself as a man of some proved capability, of some commercial consequence, on account of his long, faithful management of Tom Sears's store at Hopeville. He perceived that these men knew nothing and cared nothing about Hopeville or Tom Sears. To them he was only that bit of life's flotsam, a man seeking work. These men and the huge, busy establishments themselves, fronting the stony, smoky, clamoring streets, had the effect of wiping out the sense of capability and importance which he had derived from his long country experience, of suddenly thrusting him down to the bottom of things. He felt himself only a tramp, after all.

Eva counseled him, yearning over his disappointments and bruises. She advised him to try the want advertisements in the newspapers, to seek in other lines. He had proposed to bring his mother to the city early in September, when they could settle down in some snug little cottage or flat. In spite of his reading, he had only the vaguest ideas about the city.

He answered some of the advertisements; but at the end of ten days, when he was most depressed,

the friendliest of his drummers found him a place in the office of a dry goods house, at eight dollars a week. Here, perched on a high stool, a shaded electric lamp that burned all day over his head, he could see glimpses of something like an acre of offices, innumerably dotted with hanging electric lights and swarming with clerks. Those immediately about him were mostly boys, and the head of this particular department was a grumpy youth of twenty-five. He saw, half a block away, the wire lattices behind which the elevators rose to the upper regions. Up there somewhere — he believed it was on the second or third floor — was a suite of handsome offices inhabited by the mysterious potentates of the house. Down here he was the clerk of a clerk of a clerk, the underling of five layers of underlings. But merely to be at work comforted him. He told Eva cheerfully that the wage would at least pay his expenses until he could find something better and send for his mother. At any rate, the two individual names at the head of the firm's stationery were among the most imposing on the city's roll of commercial aristocracy.

So Thompson took his place and began his experience, an odd atom in the great stream which the fresh, raw country was continually pouring into the city, leavening its mass, bringing their simple views of life, their simple requirements, their traditions of neighborliness, economical, mainly orthodox, offering themselves to the huge mill to be ground, to have their ideas of values

rudely readjusted, to be sophisticated. Eva owned herself to be of this stream, although she had already got dimly some points which were new to Ernest. She took him about the city in such leisure as she had, showing him the Masonic Temple, the Auditorium, the Public Library, in which he proposed, enthusiastically, to get a card at once, in order to begin drawing books; to the Art Institute, where Thompson tried ineffectually to appreciate the pictures; to Lincoln Park. She showed off the imposing houses of the Lake Shore Drive and Prairie Avenue to him, which he promptly condemned politically and economically, with a countryman's orthodox antagonism to large individual wealth. She introduced him to the two divinity students, and it was through having the three men in her room of an evening that she conceived the project of the party.

She looked up Jennie and "Johnny" of the publishing house, and sent the verbal invitation to Johnny's fellow, Hewlett, through them. Miss Green, who tended the cigar stand in the restaurant, was invited, too. Nothing less than two dollars for the refreshments would satisfy Eva. The refreshments consisted of sandwiches and pickles, a cake which she baked in the landlady's stove the evening before, the ice cream which she and Tillie made before dinner, borrowing the landlady's freezer, and coffee. Cobb was taken into the project. He let Eva and Tillie off from the restaurant early in the afternoon, and gave the palms which had already done service for two days in decorating

the cashier's cage and the cigar stand. Besides making the sandwiches, freezing the ice cream, and borrowing some cups, plates, knives, forks, and spoons, Eva and Tillie framed the large gilt mirror and hung the chandelier with palms.

A little before eight o'clock, Tillie went down to the hall door, in a kind of ecstasy, to admit the guests. Thompson came first, in a long, well-worn black coat and the white tie, which were his Sunday best. The two students, carefully brushed and combed, heard him come and sallied out of their room, where they had been waiting nervously with the door ajar.

Eva had not been able to go beyond a new shirt waist for the occasion. She stood in the centre of the room, the three men about her, under the constraint of the fact that it was a company occasion.

Hewlett brought in the three ladies together, and in virtue of that at once had an advantage over the three lady-less men. Besides, the canvasser had a new suit. It was a brown sack coat; but the crease in his trousers put him at the head of the list. His sandy hair was brushed back from his sloping forehead, and he bore himself with a jaunty ease which helped Eva wonderfully in combating the leaden gloom of the introductions. Little Tillie slipped up from the hall and stood in the corner by the door, smiling in a humble self-effacement, until Eva saw her and brought her out.

"This is Miss Schilling, ladies and gentlemen," she said, her hand on Tillie's shoulder. She

named them over one by one. "And Mrs. Soden I guess you know, Tillie," she added. Tillie, smiling, very red, trying to remember not to fold her hands into her clean white apron, made a shrinking, cuddling movement against Eva's side, and gave a nervous laugh.

The guests were seated around the wall, and Eva handed to each a slip of paper on which she had put down the letters composing the names of various objects in the room. The trick was to rearrange the letters in proper order within twenty minutes. Hewlett was a tower of strength in this, for he kept calling out funny guesses that made them laugh, and an extension of the time limit was necessary. Then there was a long strip of paper on which each of the gentlemen in turn wrote a question, folding it under and handing the paper to the lady next him, who wrote an answer at random. When all had written, Eva gave the paper to Hewlett to read aloud, and again he shone resplendent, putting in a lot that had not been written at all, so that the ladies were all giggling and protesting that they never, never —

"Oh, what a whopper!" cried Johnny, when Hewlett pretended to give her answer to the stout divinity student's question. "I never wrote such a thing!"

Amid the uproar of laughter the loud voice of the stout student suddenly arose: —

"But she don't say she did n't think of writing it!"

Eva looked around, perhaps in sheer surprise.

Yes, there he was — the bashful student — red, perspiring, beaming, and thus boldly rallying the young lady beside him. She judged that the games, which she remembered from the Hopeville church sociables, had done their work and got the party by that incohesive period when the men all drifted to one corner of the room and the women to another.

If she had any doubt, it was set at rest when Mr. Culbertson, the thin student, uncovered a well-worn stock of conundrums, which he propounded with a kind of solemn humor.

At ten o'clock, the hostess and Tillie disappeared mysteriously, and a subtle expectancy pervaded the party. Tillie passed around plates and paper napkins, and she and Eva began serving the sandwiches and pickles. The refreshments took a long time. The social spirit had caught. Everybody was in the highest good humor, each striving to be entertaining, to be friendly. Hewlett knew numberless riddles which ended in a "sell" upon the person who tried to guess them. Three times Eva was called in from the hall, where the refreshments, were prepared for serving, in order that somebody might "sell" her with a joke that had been worked successfully in her absence. After the refreshments Hewlett, urged on by Johnny, got a pack of cards out of his pocket. The divinity students gave signs of uneasiness, but were reassured when he used them only to perform some mystifying and amusing tricks. Miss Green let herself be persuaded to sing "Louisiana Lou" and "She 's my Honey." There was a consultation between the divinity stu-

dents. Eva was called over. After she had insisted, Mr. Culbertson smilingly announced that Mr. Gregory would sing something, and Mr. Gregory, in a tremendous bass voice, sung twelve verses of a humorous ballad about a farmer and his bulldog and his calf.

It was twelve o'clock when the party broke up. Eva and Tillie and Thompson stood on the front steps to watch Hewlett and the ladies off, their gay voices echoing in the empty street. Thompson took his leave. The two students retired to their back room. In the emptied front room, with its drooping decorations, Tillie was saying with a kind of eager solemnity: —

"Was n't it just lovely?"

Eva laughed down at the child's earnestness; but she, too, felt it a success. The air of friendliness, the neighborly wish to please, to draw closer together, still mellowed her heart. Her common, human affection was still warmly aglow. She had the inscrutable sense of a certain gain, a certain victory, in having brought these people pleasantly together, putting them in that friendly attitude and atmosphere, as though in that fact she had a little conquered the grimness and grind of the city. It made her feel in a dumb way that she could do something in the world, after all.

But she went to bed wondering where Philip was and what he was doing.

XII

The afternoon passenger train (two coaches and a locomotive) pulled away from East Fairfax. Its diminishing roar left the shabby little station to its bright, sun-soaked solitude. Philip stood on the platform holding his bag, vaguely aware that the new station master, who had passed the time of day with the one other passenger, was casting a curious glance in his direction, and that the driver of the ancient 'bus was waiting for him. Philip was looking in the direction of the trail of smoke left by the departing train as it rounded the near base of a hill. The hill's stony upland spread its still bareness in the sun. When Philip came forward, the 'bus driver nodded, with a kind of shyness, for all his grizzled chin-whiskers. Philip shook hands, with a little smile which was half painful to him. The two horses, as ancient as the large 'bus, covered the long up-hill mile between the station and the town in a slow walk. The open windows of the stage rattled prodigiously as the old machine lurched and jolted over the stony road. The driver talked over his shoulder, now to Philip, now to the other passenger, an elderly, farmer-like man, in a starched white shirt, who sat on the other side of the vehicular ark, with a huge valise of shiny black leather against his feet.

Philip answered at random, staring out of the windows at the church spires which pierced the leafy screen ahead; at the tattered flank of the old mill, whose pond they crossed on a paintless wooden bridge; at the big butternut-tree in the fork of the road. A dozen signboards of shoe and clothing stores and the like were nailed to the trunk of the tree. These commercial signs seemed pathetically grotesque, as though one had found them in a desert. A man in a straw hat and overalls, trudging along the road, stood aside in the dusty grass to let the stage lumber by, and stared up at them with bovine curiosity. Two barefoot youngsters and a dog were following the bank of the little waterway. As the stage entered the hilly town, a lank woman in a sunbonnet was carrying a pail of water into one of the small, bare frame houses. The ancient horses broke into a sort of ineffectual, agonized trot, which was hardly faster than their walk. They drew up at the inn, an old warped and colonial structure, with three noble trees in front. Some townsmen loafed in stout wooden chairs under the trees, chewing tobacco and blinking silently up at the stage or at the empty street. Somewhere back of the inn a cock crowed in the still, hot midday. Each detail of this old picture, which was indelibly engraved on his mind, came back to Philip's aching senses. A slow, mournful dread of it, like a cruel obsession, weighted his heart, as though, after all, it claimed him for its own; as though, no matter where he went or what he did, he must always come back to this

ineffable dreariness from which the breath of life had departed. He seemed to smell stagnation in the hot, still air. He seemed to feel the place sterilely weltering in its broad, moveless sunshine whose heat gave no cheer. A lump came into his throat as when he was a boy with his dreams, helpless in his pain and revolt at the narrow, stony place.

The stage turned into a street of larger dwellings, each in a wide yard. Some of these larger houses were empty and ruinous, the wide lawns overgrown and unkempt. Philip stared forward. His heart beat up painfully. Yes, there stood Elmira at the gate in the picket fence, before the roomy, well-shaded house in which he had been born. The house looked aged and out of repair. The eaten limestones of the foundation, barely showing through grass and vines, seemed immemorially old, — as old as the oldest headstones in a cemetery. Grass grew rank in the yard. There was a tangle of untended currant bushes, a tiny jungle, at one side, growing up to a woodshed of weather-blackened boards.

As the 'bus drew up, Philip's father arose from a rocking-chair on the porch and came down to the gate. Philip stood before them. He took his sister's spare hands, kissed her, and stood for a moment vaguely smiling, looking down at the lean, frail, ailing woman, already middle-aged in appearance, although she was but four years his senior. The face was long, colorless, and plain; the lightish brown hair, combed severely back from

her brow, was thin and touched with gray. The eyes were like his, brown, warm, full of affection.

He turned to his father. There was a hand-clasp, a word of greeting, a smile on both sides. But these two had so little to say to each other. Marvin senior was a small man, slight, and quite round-shouldered. He wore a big mustache, now of a peculiar grayish whiteness, like his sparse, long, rather curly hair. His thin face was of a kind of indurated redness, as though the wrinkled skin had been tanned. His head was an oval, from the large lobes of the brain to the small, pointed chin. There was still something vaguely picturesque, something indefinably uncommon about him, and this note was perhaps accentuated by the shabby old black velvet jacket and the slightly exaggerated limp bow-tie that he wore. He could talk very well, as Philip knew; but on this ground, as also Philip knew, he was dumb. He had chosen to study architecture, and, by a law of gravitation, had remained in East Fairfax, where nothing but fences and an occasional shed were built. Philip saw him as a strange, placid St. Sebastian, stuck full of the arrows of his wife's scorn. She had exhausted her whole quiver upon him without ever being able to overcome his obstinate, mollusk-like resistance; without ever moving that inertia of his, which seemed as solid and everlasting as these granite hills.

"But where's mother?" said Philip.

"She must be coming," said Elmira.

The sitting-room door opened, and the body of

the tragedy appeared, — the ample, but dignified and still comely figure of a woman, walking lamely with the help of a cane. She stepped out on the porch and waited, as though even then she would keep her state. There was something inexpressibly proud in this simple act, in this simple attitude of waiting, like royalty, to be approached.

Philip ran across the yard, sprang to the porch, embraced her, kissed her. His arms instantly dropped back to his side. He felt an embarrassment, a self-consciousness, even in holding her hand a moment longer. The strong emotion which she evoked was mingled with love, pity, self-abasement, and fear. For some years, this deep, indescribable fear had been part of the constant attitude of his mind toward her. The proud woman had endured so much in the helpless incapacity of her husband, the steady decline of the family fortunes, Elmira's marriage, — which was supposed to have been beneath her, — their dependence in some measure upon the unwelcome son-in-law. For some years, Philip had brooded upon this. He had made it into his tragedy, asking himself whether the curse of barrenness was upon him, too; whether he was another of the Marvins to welter further down into vegetating nonentity. When he thought of his father and mother, he felt an infirmity in his will as another man might have felt the imagined touch of an hereditary taint of blood or bone. He saw his father, the placid St. Sebastian, now quite motionless; scarcely pretending that he even tried to earn a living; eating his

unwelcome son-in-law's bread and his wife's scorn with equal helplessness; stuck in his half-crazy dream. This figure, to Philip, was like that of a man in the last stages of an incurable malady. He saw his mother always looking out to him, watching, waiting, weighing, hoping her dearest hope that he would justify her and himself, that he would bring forth a capable, honorable performance. She had not reproached him, not even when he had foolishly run away to Paris and foolishly run home again. It seemed to Philip that in the day when she did reproach him, something terrible would happen, a destiny would be fulfilled. This deep, indescribable fear of her judgment, and of completing her tragedy by finally failing her, was part of the constant attitude of his mind toward her.

He looked down at her in his agitation and self-consciousness. For the first time he saw threads of white in her brown hair. Her face seemed to have taken some fine new wrinkles in the year. But in the strong nose, the curve of the lips, the full chin, the brows, it was still armed with pride.

Perhaps it was a touch of the same self-consciousness which prompted Elmira to lead the way into the house, to the front room off the ample hall, the parlor, as though he had been a guest. She opened the green blinds on two sides. The light that came in showed the old, prim parlor furniture of massive, upholstered walnut. The light could not dissipate the damp, mouldy feeling in the air of this apartment, as though the gloom of

innumerable Puritan sabbaths still lingered there. Philip felt an indefinable cold touch his bones. The trees threw their thick shade all around. It seemed to him that the sun had never shone in this room, that its dead air had never been vitalized by the flow of human feeling. They kept up the talk, asking him questions about Chicago, his work, his associates; Elmira now and then offering some local gossip about things and people which he had all but forgotten.

The brother-in-law came home, — a small, nervous man, with a wide brow, an oval face, a very short, sparse, black beard. Between him and Philip there was a dislike. Ezra's ambition had been all for the ministry. At fifteen, while he clerked in the grocery to support himself and his mother, he spent the evenings reading theological books. He was too poor, too cramped money-wise, too slight physically, to make his way to the seminary over the obstacles in his path. The very opportunity which Ezra so desired had been freely extended to Philip, pressed upon him, put again and again in his way, and Philip had contemptuously flung it aside. Ezra had never been able to square the facts with his sense of justice; to quite forgive Philip for having had this chance which seemed so precious to him, and wantonly flinging it away. Elmira was supposed to have married beneath her. Yet Whitcomb had a kind of indomitable, rodent-like activity, which brought in the money that they needed. In his little upstairs notary public's office in the town he did conveyan-

cing, insuring, and all sorts of like clerkly odd-jobbing. In spite of this draft upon his strength, he kept up his theological studies. Even now, at thirty-five, he was trying to teach himself Greek of evenings, and he was a particularly active member of the Congregational Church. The two children came in from school, and Philip tried awkwardly to patch up his indifferent friendship with them while Elmira went to finish preparations for the noon meal. In this gloomy parlor, every aspect and article of which was intimately knit up with his own life, surrounded by the nearest persons of his blood, Philip had a strange, painful sense of turning over the bones of his past.

After the midday dinner, while the two women were doing up the dishes and Mr. Marvin went to lie down, Philip and Ezra found themselves on the porch with the weight of each other's company on their hands.

"Elmira seems not very strong," Philip suggested.

"No," said Ezra. Then after a moment he added, in his sweet, even voice: "We suspect it 's consumption."

Philip stared over at his brother-in-law, his heart stricken, his affection wounded, by that dreadful word. In his distress he felt an angry resentment against Whitcomb's coolness.

"I never heard — I did n't know," he stammered confusedly. He cast an anxious glance over his shoulder. "Can't we walk somewhere?" he said under his breath.

Ezra assented at once. They walked leisurely down the street, Whitcomb replying to Philip's anxious inquiries. He went over the case, the symptoms, the increasing frequency of the cough, the failing strength, the consultations with the physicians, all calmly, methodically, owning Philip's right to know everything, understanding his anxiety, his alarm; but most collectedly, without a tremor in his voice.

"But, my God! She must be got away! She must go somewhere! Another climate — California — the mountains! Don't you see!" In his agitation Philip forgot to be courteous. His sister was dying. His instinct for beauty, his impassioned desire of happiness, writhed under that cruel thought.

First of all, Ezra forgave him the discourtesy, glancing up at him with a calm smile. "We have talked that over several times," he replied, in his sweet voice. "It is what I would wish for her sake and my own. But there are obstacles. Merely on the money side, it would be difficult. It would be impossible for me to go, difficult to take the children, and Elmira does not wish it. This is our place where we were put. Whether it comes to any one of us soon or late, it must come sooner or later. Why not wait for it here, in our home, a family united, rather than break apart? Such, I think, is her feeling about it, — and my feeling, now." His large, dark eyes looked serenely up at Philip. "It is not, you know, the end; only a beginning."

A moment elapsed before Philip fully comprehended his brother-in-law. Then he understood this calm acceptance of death; this attitude toward life as a mere trial and preparation. Abruptly he found himself quite helpless. He could only stare at Whitcomb in a dumbly anguished, baffled way. The words of protest, of argument, which he wished to utter would not shape themselves in his mind. He felt that they would be useless if he could say them. He had the sense again, as so often in his youth, of impotent contact with that spirit which forbade him beauty and joy.

"I can help you out on the money," he said, without considering whether he could or not.

"Yes, no doubt. But that would n't alter it finally," said Ezra.

Philip looked again at his brother-in-law. It came to him that this man, truly loving Elmira, yet derived a certain joy, a certain exaltation, in consigning her and himself to a sort of martyrdom, in giving the proof of his faith. He perceived by an intuitive flash that it was really Whitcomb's will, imposing itself upon Elmira, which carried them on in this way, — his will even when she seemed the one who made the decision and he seemed reluctant. Elmira's eyes were in Philip's thought, — those warm, affectionate brown eyes, like his own; and he seemed to feel, deep down in her nature, the love of life and happiness, the human will to live and enjoy, constrained, repressed, buried, but inextinguishable, gleaming pathetically out through the ice.

It was not until evening, when Ezra and Elmira had gone to church, and the children were in bed, that Philip had a chance to talk with his father and mother alone. He brought up Elmira's health at once.

"Yes, her lungs are affected," said Mrs. Marvin. "She has been failing for several months." Her voice did not change. Her dark eyes looked firmly over at Philip. Abruptly, without change of voice, but with startling distinctness, she pronounced the words: "She will die of it."

Again, at the word, Philip felt that tumult of pain. "But she ought to go away!" he protested.

Mrs. Marvin gave him a deep glance, then put her fingers to her lips in a way she had when she meditated, and looked into her lap. Her husband sat by the table, near the lamp, turning the pages of a magazine. His brows were slightly contracted; but he pretended not to have heard.

Philip stared from one to the other of these silent figures. The ticking of the small clock on the mantel seemed to become immensely distinct and significant, like the sands of time audibly running in the midst of eternity. Abruptly he comprehended the whole history of this house, — the welter of inertia dragging it down, and the proud woman's spirit waiting for release from a slowly sinking prison. He felt again the tumult of pain evoked by the thought of death. And all at once he felt his own helplessness before the mass of opposition, — Ezra's fanatical will, Elmira's fond acquiescence, his father's stubborn aloofness, his

mother's pride, the lack of money. He wished to protest, to struggle. But at once he felt his own will against the mass of opposition like a straw against iron. He was bound. He himself was of the foundering house. The ticking of the small clock seemed to become immensely distinct and significant.

He became aware, more clearly than ever before, of the tacit division in the house, made by Ezra and Mrs. Marvin, — the two active wills. The household really lived on opposite sides of this invisible wall. On the morrow, which was Sunday, it was left to Elmira to take Philip to church, her husband having gone off early on his constant church business.

It was extremely hot. The planks of the sidewalk, heated by the sun, warmed through the soles of their shoes. The thick leafage glittered in the flood of dazzling light. Along the hot, sleepy streets other villagers, rustling and uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes, were on their way to morning service. The church was just the same, — the same hard pews ; the two clusters of kerosene lamps with tin reflectors over them depending from the peaked ceiling ; the same people rustling with a kind of solemnity into their pews. Philip thought it was the same sermon, although he did not attend very strictly. The high, narrow windows were thrown open. Outside, the thick green leaves of the oak and maple trees glistened and murmured in the sun and air. Small birds chattered and twittered among the branches. It came vividly

back to Philip how he had sat on those benches at Sunday-school when he was an urchin, looking out at the glistening leaves and longing with all his might to get outside in the sun and air. He glanced around now, his eyes dimmed from the brilliant light at the window, and he seemed to feel a dreary breath of decay. He felt an odd fear of something intangible, sombre, as though some way it might fasten upon him with its dreariness and he should never again know joy.

The strong morning sun, shining through the treetops and warming him in his bed, waked him. The whole world seemed awake. The branches outside his window were populous with birds. The very heat of the sun upon his body was pleasant for all its ardor. Then the town began coming up to him, — the empty streets, the reserved houses in the shade; the old, old vines and shrubbery in the yards; the dressed-up formal folk going sadly off to church. All seemed so mournful, repressed, joyless. This impression had only strengthened with his stay. He looked down at his bare, strong arm; at the firm white flesh. There was life. Again as he dressed, he looked down at his long, muscular limbs. An immense pity of himself assailed him. What a fine animal he was! How much he desired to live, to enjoy! Yet it could be only for a day, and his day was swiftly passing. Already he was nearly thirty. A few more rounds of the dial and the vigor would begin to leave these fine limbs; this blood in them would begin to cool and

thicken, to run sluggish in the withered veins. Only a few days more — to-morrow, almost — and this firm flesh would begin to shrink and wrinkle. Decrepitude would be upon him. He would be an old man, blinking out with dim eyes at a world which had forever rolled by him. Already his youth was spent. Where had it gone? He had sat dreaming as it glided past. At that moment he cared nothing for success, achievement, reputation. All those things were alike idle and empty; mere snares for the unwary. His great cry was: "My happiness has escaped me!" He felt the dismal air of this, his house, stagnating, giving itself over to death. The curse of sterility impended over his head.

A gay voice called to him out of the west. His dismal air seemed suddenly swept by the broad wind of the prairies. He saw her standing firm and free, the beauty and vigor of her limbs, the courage and generosity of her eyes, like a living image of his desired joy. An impassioned resolve, the desperate courage of a forlorn hope, whirled him up. "She shall listen to me! She shall give me my life!" he thought.

Eva sat on the front steps of the Tomb, trying to be cheerful. Sarah had written that she should stay in Indiana indefinitely. She was not improving very much. "It will be the regret of my life that I missed the party," she said.

Ernest Thompson had just come along. He was sitting on the steps below Eva.

"Mighty hot," he suggested. He cleared his throat.

Eva, thinking of Sarah, let the conversation lag a moment.

Ernest cleared his throat again. "H'm-m. Did you know Charley Dean?"

"Dean? I don't remember."

"Used to travel for a grocery house, — short, stout man with no hair."

"Seems to me I remember him." Eva was trying to be interested.

"I happened to run across him to-day. He and Emory Soden used to be great chums."

"Yes." Eva looked around with abrupt alertness.

"I suppose — you don't hear from Emory now."

"No; not for a long time."

"Dean saw him in Texas last spring." Thompson bent over and examined his shoe lace. "He says he 's married."

"What — Emory is?" Her breath failed a little.

"Yes. Soden told him he 'd married a Mexican rancher's daughter and was going to South America.' He told Charley he 'd got a divorce from you. I thought maybe you knew."

"No, I did n't know. Did Dean know the woman — he married?"

"No; from what he heard from others, I guess Soden did n't have much choice. At least, Dean heard that the girl's father and two of his men came over to Texas to get Emory. They had their

guns, and he went back with them and married the girl. But he told Charley he 'd got a divorce down there."

"Where can I find out?" She was all eagerness now. "Will you see Dean again and find out where he got the divorce. That 's all I want to know."

Ernest looked steadily down the street. "I asked Dean about that. He said Soden was shy about going into particulars. But he said he 'd got the divorce all right."

Eva looked down the street, too, and for a moment nothing was said.

"I don't believe it," she announced in a low voice, with unmoving eyes. "It would n't be like him to bother about a divorce."

"Well — h'm-m — you can't tell now," argued the man to whom she had been engaged, and who still helplessly loved her. "He might a-done it, especially if the rancher insisted. I guess divorces come pretty easy down that way. Like as not he got one. Anyhow he 's married again, and that seems to let you out."

She looked dumbly at him, as though trying to accept his point of view.

XIII

She heard Philip's voice as he spoke to the landlady at the front door. The door at the head of the stairs stood open. He reached in and tapped on the panel. She did not answer. Without waiting to rap again he walked in, and saw her sitting by the window. There was no greeting. He simply crossed the room, his straw hat in his hand, and sat down at the other side of the window.

"Well, Eva, I 've come back — to you," he said grave'y.

He looked very large — and handsome. He appeared, some way, to have grown. She subtly felt a new quality in him, — a kind of singleness. Philip himself felt strangely simple and single. The difficulties, the complexities, more than all that inertia which imposed upon his will, seemed to have fallen away.

He continued at once, gravely and simply: "I 've been home to the house where I was born, to my own people." He went on gravely, telling her about East Fairfax, the empty streets soaking in the sun, the reserved old houses, with wide yards grown rank with grass and old, old shrubbery, the stony and sterile uplands, the formal town folk rustling uncomfortably into the still, bare church.

"That is my place, Eva; the place that claims

me. I dreamed with all my might of being a painter; but they would not let me do that, and I could n't help myself. There is something to me in that air, — wide and still and emptily bright, as though a whole world had died there. It gets here;" he gravely touched his forehead. "I found my sister ill, dying of consumption. Her husband is infatuated with theology. He will not send her away to a better climate where she might get well. He loves her; but his heart is one of those old stones. He is n't human. She takes his point of view. Her eyes are like mine. She wishes to live that she may love her children, her husband, her friends, — if only she knew how. But she accepts death. My father is incompetent. He has a good mind, talents, — perhaps some unusual talents; but he cannot use them. He has grown barren. I am his son. Ever since I was a little boy, I have known that he could not do things. As far back as I can remember, I seemed to know that I must ask nothing of him. I think of that now, sometimes. What could be more terrible than to have one's little child understand that one can do nothing! Only my mother — I am telling you all this because I wish you to understand fully. There is something in all that — in that stony dreariness which has weighed upon me all my life. I want to live. I want to be happy. You — I met you, and back there in my own house, among my own people, it was of you I thought. I should die there; but I could think of you. I am thirty years old. I have always been

perplexed. It confused me, trying to think how I could get hold of my life. You came along, and it was meant that you should come. There is a kind of justice which will finally some time give a man his chance. I see it all very clearly now. You are beautiful and brave and generous and capable. You would forgive me and bring me back to the mark and give me my chance."

He had spoken without pause or haste, without a word from her, more than half an hour. She was silent for a minute or two longer, looking out of the window, her hands in her lap, nervously turning the plain band of gold upon the third finger of her left hand.

Without directly replying or commenting upon what he said, she began nervously: "I heard from Emory Soden the other day. A man that used to know him and me told me" — and she repeated the substance of what Thompson had said.

"Oh, see! see!" he burst out radiantly. "Then there is nothing whatever in the way! It's all right! I know! Did n't I tell you!" He sprang up, his joy demanding motion. "There is justice! Did n't I tell you!" He took two or three steps, and back again, his arms moving from sheer excess of triumph. "Yes, there is justice! See! And you" — he stood over her, his face shining — "you are bringing all this home to me! All that I have missed, everything all my life that failed me, all that eluded me, — see, it was all that you might gather it up in your hands and bring it home to me!" He put his hand on the back of the chair

and bent over her, aglow. "You harvest woman! how I love you!"

"Oh! — but Philip! Philip, dear!" She was trembling. Her voice shook. His boy-like happiness was so great that it seemed a kind of murder to dash it. "Oh, don't you see — this does n't really change it. That 's just a story somebody told — about the divorce. We don't know that it 's true. It may not be true at all. It would n't be like him to get a divorce — to bother about one."

In the face of his happiness, she could not say that even if there was a divorce, it might not change the basis of the situation. She was shaking because she put this check upon his great joy. To dash the joy seemed a murder. Her heart quivered over it.

Philip stared down at her in a kind of astounded accusation. "But he 's taken another wife! He 's married again! What would free you more completely than that! Don't you see!" In the painful, anxious labor of his mind he was trying to get up an argument, to reason with her, to convince her. But abruptly it seemed monstrous, incredible, unspeakable.

"You put me aside for a fantasy! a whim! This man does n't want you; does n't ask for you; freely releases you. And I" — He struggled with his emotion, looking down at her in despair which shook her heart. "Am I not a man! Everything fails me! The current carries me by! I fail everywhere! I ask for a bride, and the woman

who loves me walks away with a shadow! My God! am I not even a man!"

She could not look at him. His despair racked her. She kept looking out of the window, her fingers turning faster at the ring. She spoke tremulously, with a breathless haste.

"It ain't only my being married, Philip. I 'm not well educated, as you are. I was n't brought up the same way. I suppose I might have learned, if anybody 'd shown me. I was n't stupid; but nobody did show me. It was n't supposed to be necessary for anybody to know more than enough to make a living. There was n't anybody who could make me see it any different. I had pretty hair, and a good complexion and figure. I could beat most of the other girls that way, so what was the use of knowing anything? I guess that 's about the way I looked at it, and most of the women I knew looked at it that way. Now, I 'll never know only enough to be a shop-girl."

"Oh, shop-girl! shop-girl!" Philip threw away the words in scorn. "You know how to live; how to be happy and to give happiness! That 's more than all the rest. Say shop-girl if you like. And I 'm just a shop-man. It 's only poor little you and poor little me in a big, careless world. If we can be happy — if we can be happy" — The mere word smothered his heart with emotion. His hands moved toward her, then he remembered, lifted his big arms, and let them fall by his side. "Oh, you won't let me touch you! You won't let me come near you! Am I so bad?"

The last foolish cry, more foolish than any of the rest, and the big, helpless figure of the man, struck hardest at her heart. At once all her capacity for affection, her courage, her generosity, flooded up and obliterated everything else. She seemed to herself mean, selfish, stingy.

"No, no! You 're not bad! You know I don't mean that! I 'd do anything for you, Phil. I truly love you."

Her voice and eyes told him all. He stood an instant, taking the message into his confusion. Then he dropped on his knees beside her chair and caught her hands together.

"Only, you know, dear," she warned gently.

"There is n't any 'only;' there can't be," he said. "There never can be again. There 's just you and me."

She looked down into his ardent eyes. Every particle of defensiveness had fallen away. It seemed just as he had said, — that everything was settled; that it could not be otherwise. Looking down, she laughed softly. "I think you 're a great big baby," she said.

In the laugh and tone he felt her love, her generosity, her womanly capacity, flowing out to him.

"Yes, a big baby, crying for you," he said in irresponsible happiness. Even while he knew it was all settled, and that she gave herself to him, he was still afraid some way to touch her further. For a moment more he held her hands, looking at her smiling eyes, which seemed fondly to make fun of him.

Inscrutably she felt a touch of fate and rose to meet it. She cared for nothing else. She was immensely happy in this fulfillment of self-bestowal.

"You must be sensible now," she said, after the silent moment. She continued to smile at him, and she added with a kind of happy deliberateness, as though she did not care, or found it a precious joke: "The whole street can see you through the window, and the door is wide open. Go sit down. We must talk it over sensibly, and see what 's to be done."

He mechanically obeyed her will, standing up, his head in a whirl of happiness.

"Anything you like!" he said, with an inebriate gayety. He put the chair in front of her and sat down in it. "Of course, the only sensible thing is to go over to St. Joe to-morrow and be married." He scarcely knew what he was saying. He was conscious of her sobering and reflecting.

"Yes — perhaps" — she said thoughtfully.

In this deliberation, in this qualified assent, it came home to him clearly that she was going to come into his life; that she was putting herself in his hands. He perceived clearly for the first time what all this meant to her, how momentous an undertaking it was to her; and for a moment a kind of solemnity superimposed itself upon his joy.

"Perhaps," she repeated. "But you know there 's a law — if he should n't have got the divorce — you see, dear, it is n't so easy."

The tyrannous joy came uppermost, secretly

raging at the hint of a check. "But we have each other, dear girl," he said. "We must answer to ourselves and to each other before everything else."

The lodging-house in Dearborn Avenue was not much unlike the Tomb. It was one of a long row of narrow, shabby fronts, overlooking a narrow, shabby street. The front steps were the great social resource. The third floor front of this particular house had an alcove, in which the bed and rickety washstand stood, a worn brussels carpet, a battered chiffonier, and a little round table between the two windows with a cheap oil lamp upon it. Two large wooden boxes packed with Philip's books stood one upon the other in the corner. Next them stood Philip's trunk, with a bag, an overcoat, and two hat-boxes piled on top of it. Against the opposite wall was another trunk, smaller, older, shabbier. Evening was falling. Philip walked restlessly about the room, never stopping, now glancing nervously first from one window, then from the other; pacing to the door, to the alcove, and back again, fumbling blindly at his watch guard, plunging his hands in his pockets and at once withdrawing them, pulling out his watch every two minutes, astonished, maddened, by the slow passage of time; or in a moment quite senselessly overwhelmed with a deadly fear because so much time had passed and she had not come.

They had rented the room the afternoon of the

day before, to take possession the morrow. Philip perceived that Eva wished to be left alone to gather up the last things from the Tomb, to come alone to their new place. Besides, he had his own things to bring from his lodging further north, near the park. He had brought them before dinner, half hoping to find her. Then he had hurried out to get a mouthful of dinner and hurried back, fearful lest some way she should come and go away again in his absence. True, she had said, " In the evening." But here it was half past seven, and she had not come. He tormented himself with reproaches. He should have kept with her all the time. Now, she might change her mind, might get some new scruples, — might not come.

The doorbell jangled below. He ran to the hall. There was a boy's voice talking to somebody. He told himself that she had sent a note, saying that she could not come; that she would not carry out the arrangement; she had made up her mind to go back to Soden; asking him to send her trunk. And as he thought this, he determined with the greatest positiveness to commit suicide at once. There was a pistol in his trunk. He would blow out his brains. The act was fixed, arranged in his mind with the utmost clearness and certainty. It seemed to him absolutely and unanswerably impossible to live, if she should fail him this night. He was no longer in the least a reasoning being. All his desires converged at this single point; his instinct for beauty, his hunger for happiness, fused here. For once his dream had become concrete,

embodied, palpably offering itself to him. Now if it tricked him, nothing but a blank was left. He had wished this consummation so ardently, had let himself go out to it so long, that now in the crisis he could not think, he had no self-control, no power of self-direction. He could only rush on in the single, impassioned, headlong stream of desire, which his own heart had evoked. His nerves suffered torments in the suspense. He could not sit down, or keep still. He wished to light the gas; but the idea of even so far taking control of himself hurt his mind as though it were some tremendous task. He kept thinking that she might see the dark windows and go away. Finally, he did bring himself to light the gas and pull down the shades. This made a slight noise. As this noise ceased, abruptly, he heard a light footfall on the upper stairs — in the hall. He stood still, unable to move. A sudden sense of suffocation filled his breast and pressed under his eyes. The door was pushed open. Eva stepped in, carrying a bag.

That sense of suffocation from his overworked heart remotely worried him a little. In that touch he saw that she was pale; her deep blue eyes looked solemnly over at him. She, too, was suffering, in her different way. He went forward and took her bag from her hand. Her solemn eyes looked up at him.

"Well, Philip, I 've come," she said gravely.

"Yes, dear — you 've come," he murmured, in a strange embarrassment. Partly because of the embarrassment, he stepped over and put her bag

on the trunk. She looked around the room, took off her hat, and sat down in the worn rocking-chair, her hands in her lap, and began rocking slightly to and fro. Philip came over and sat near her, with a strangely self-conscious, guilty feeling in this presence which he had so ardently desired.

"I was almost afraid you were n't coming," he said, at random.

"I sat in the room over there awhile," she said. "I thought of a good many things, Philip." Her voice faltered a little.

She stood up. Without knowing why, he stood up, too. She gave him her hands. Standing before him, pale, evidently suffering, she went on rapidly, without pause, looking him steadily in the face. "It is n't the way a woman would want to come to her husband. I made a mistake before when there was a regular marriage. This may some way make that mistake right, and that may make this right. I know we talked it all over, dear, and this seemed the best way, — better than going to St. Joe, I mean. There is the law about marriages, and going to St. Joe is n't much of anything, any way, if you look at it one way. It ain't the minister and the license. I know that part don't amount to much. It 's you, dear. It 's the way I come to you. I have n't got any money or anything like that to give you. I 've just got myself to give you. And if I should ever think that you thought that I did n't give myself in the right way, because I come to you like this, it would break my heart."

He was dragging her hands up to his lips, stammering protestations, vows, endearments. He felt an immense shame for his heedless greed to possess her, an immense pure tenderness for her, such as he had felt in the park. He wished only to make her happy, to protect her. He saw her as a beautiful, gentle creature caught in his snare.

"I hope I 'm a good woman, dear," she went on. "If you feel it the way I do, why then I don't care. Because, Phil, you must know that I loved you all I could, or I would n't have come this way."

Holding her hands against his breast, he looked at her with a sudden, deep soberness. "You are my wife — my dear wife." He pronounced the words slowly.

She bent her head to his shoulder.

"I love you," she whispered.

XIV

In his den at the publishing house, Philip straightened his big body back from the littered desk, with a sigh which he was scarcely aware of. His eyes wandered to the high window. He stared out, with only a mechanical consciousness of the view, — the lower roofs across the street, the strip of green along the lake front, its bronze horseman thrown out of drawing from this high perch, the leaden, restless waters of the lake, ruffled with whitecaps, the low, gray, and sullen sky. It was only September, but one needed an overcoat out of doors. A large schooner beat laboriously toward the harbor. Philip's blank eyes rested upon it, without understanding what it was. He glanced back at the littered desk and the pile of proof-sheets which he had been going through. He looked at his watch, — a quarter of five. He calculated dully that in three quarters of an hour the proofs would be finished. Then, at once, with hardly a perceptible intervening action of the mind, he shoved the proofs aside, closed his desk, sprang up, threw off his jacket, and began hurriedly putting on his coat and overcoat. He could not go fast enough now. He must see Eva — instantly. It was quite beyond reason, — simply an overwhelming, irresistible, tyrannous need to get where

she was, to find her with his eyes and hands, — an obsession which he could not put off.

It had been that way for a week, — he must get home to her presence, must see her personally before him. He struggled with the thing all day. Then, as the time for leaving the office drew near, it abruptly overwhelmed him, seized upon him, and swept him along.

For Philip had had his way. The week before, Eva had left the restaurant. This was not their bargain. He was to work and she was to work. They were to be partners, helpers, giving each other their love, but each self-supporting. Eva put a certain value upon this. Her economic independence helped her over the fact that, however much their love, however great her devotion, the law denied her the name of Philip's wife. It was a sort of proof, a testimony, of her disinterestedness. She wished to give all; to offer all she had at the feet of this offended law. She was happier at work. Philip understood this, too. But his masculine pride was in the way. He could not bear to think of her working on in the restaurant, surrounded by gabby, cheeky young men, to whom she was merely a handsome cashier. He wished to support her. It wounded his man's self-respect that the woman who was really his wife worked for her living. He began avoiding the restaurant. It shamed and stung him to see her there at her work. At the bottom of all lay the old, stubborn, stupid masculine instinct for complete possession, dragging him on to tie her up, to make her depend-

ent upon him, to put his sign of ownership upon her. He knew it was a grief to her to give up her work; that it was unfair, ungenerous of him to insist. Yet that stubborn, stupid male pride and instinct for possession dragged him on. When he put it on the ground of his right to support her as his wife, and she saw how he felt about it, she finally yielded. With her woman's wisdom, she half knew that it was merely his masculine pride and jealousy. But in her greater wisdom she yielded, having given herself, willing to do whatever would make him happy. The next day, stealing up to the room, he had found her sitting by the window, looking out, her capable hands lying idle in her lap. In her patient attitude, her empty hands, he perceived how much he had taken away from her. He accused himself, reproached himself, even wondering at these deep, selfish, brutish forces within him which led him on to treat her unfairly, to take advantage of her generosity. About this time other things, which had lain deep and hidden in his mind, ruthlessly buried, began to stir and trouble him. He knew well enough that he had not treated her fairly about this union. He should not have let her bestow herself in that way. All the advantage was on his side. She took all the risks. He was sincere in thinking the mere marriage ceremony unimportant. But he had permitted the thing to be secret, almost clandestine, taking her to this miserable lodging-house, where all sorts of people came, in his heedless greed to possess her at once, to go the shortest way to his

desire. Again it was that deep, reasonless instinct to seize her, to put his fetters upon her as quickly as possible.

Even this was not all. He had not yet written to his people; especially, he had not written to his mother. Beyond the indolent man's dread of a scene, of stirring up a feminine commotion about his ears, he had that dread of his mother's judgment; he had that strange fear of hearing her say that he, too, had failed her. The more shame he felt for the shabby lodging-house arrangement, the less he could bring himself to present the affair, in that setting, to his people. He told himself it was only a makeshift. Some changes were underway in the publishing house. Parsons was about to step out definitely. It appeared that his position was likely to improve some —

Meanwhile, all this was not fair to Eva. It was not giving her her place as his wife,—and his very trouble was one which, naturally, he could not tell her about. How much she had given him! How little he had given in return! His bad conscience drove him to rush home to her, to assure himself vaguely that she had not found him out and gone away. In his trouble and self-reproach, it seemed to him that by loving her enough in his selfish way he could atone to her, could justify himself. He had begun talking to her about taking a little flat in the spring, because that pleased her.

Running breathlessly up the two dim flights of stairs and bursting into the third floor front, Philip found her standing on a rickety chair, tacking a

large lithograph of a fleet of battleships over a rent in the dingy wall-paper. The first mere sight of her stilled the agitation in his heart. Yes, here she was.

Eva looked over her shoulder. "Why, hello, Filipino! You 're early again," she called; and when he came beside her chair, she stooped gingerly, on her insecure footing, the hammer in one hand, tacks in the other, and kissed him.

There was a smell of varnish in the room, and he saw that she had been touching up some battered places on the old bureau. The dingy wall-paper, with its tear which she was trying to cover with the lithograph of the battleships, her cheerful attempt to make something more presentable and attractive out of this shabby room, hurt the sore place in the man's mind. He threw his arms around her.

"There!" as she kissed him again. "Careful, now, young man, or you 'll upset your landlady!"

It had been this way from the beginning,—from the first morning when she kissed him as he went to his earlier work. After that first night, there was no looking back on her part. She accepted everything, even this poor room, with the most perfect good faith, with the greatest good humor. He found how good a fellow she was. True, for three days they had argued the matter of her leaving the restaurant, and once they had been on the verge of a quarrel. He had felt her strong temper coming up. But she had yielded, and in this, too, there had been no looking back. Once

it was done, she completely accepted it. This perfect good faith, this generosity, shamed him. He was tormented because he had so little to give her. The place to which he had taken her, where at least some of the people seemed dubious, accused his heart. The money question was in the way. Eva showed him the possibilities of the savings bank account. She calculated enthusiastically that by spring they would have enough to take the little flat, if they bought some of the furniture on the installment plan.

Coming home one day a little early, and possessed by his passion to see Eva at once, he heard voices in the room. When he entered, he saw a young man with sandy hair, in a threadbare, carefully brushed suit, with a little imitation diamond in his shirt front, and a slender young woman, with soft black eyes, in an imitation lamb's wool cloak. He vaguely identified them as from the publishing house. Eva arose, beaming, and introduced them as Mr. and Mrs. Hewlett. "You 've seen them before, I guess," she said.

Johnny and her husband were a little ill at ease in the close personal encounter with one of the figures from the front office, — a man in touch with the mysterious powers which ruled the publishing house, holding the disposition of their jobs and their wages.

When they left, Eva explained it. They had gone over to St. Joe and been married. They had the third floor back in the next lodging-house. She had met Johnny quite by chance on the street.

The husband and wife were still at work in the publishing house, with no very decided prospect of anything better economically, but quite happy. She was full of her woman's enthusiasm over this case. It touched her inherent sense of romance, — these two poor people getting married in that way, taking their happiness in spite of the world, facing it together. Besides, she was glad to have Johnny near, for it was a bit lonesome. So far as Philip could see, she had no shade of reluctance to a neighborly common footing with Mr. and Mrs. Hewlett.

Philip had the reluctance in plenty. This intrusion of the shabby canvasser and his bride seemed to vulgarize his position. He imagined Johnny and Hewlett gossiping about him and Eva to the other men and women in the publishing house, and shuddered over the imagining. This intrusion in a relationship outwardly so like his and Eva's seemed indelibly to cheapen him, to bind him fast to a fellowship of courting, eloping canvassers and shop-girls.

Then, on a Saturday afternoon, he leaped from the street car without waiting for it to stop. He hurried blindly along the block and a half to the lodging-house without seeing the objects about him. His too eager hand fumbled with the latch-key a moment. He blundered up the two flights, taking three steps at once, and burst into the third floor front. At first he could not speak. The violent exercise and the violent emotion brought on a kind of vertigo, a suffocation of the heart, to

which he was sometimes subject. His face was empurpled. He felt his wife's arm around him; heard her alarmed voice calling, "Philip, oh, Phil!" He knew that she was half dragging him toward the open window. He saw her face, frightened, tense, loving. He made a mighty effort for speech.

"Eva! Eva!" he gasped. The breath came into his choked lungs. "I 've got Parsons's place — Parsons's place at the publishing house." He got his feet uncertainly, caught her, and held her hard against his breast. "It 's four thousand a year — for — for you! Thank God! We can live now as we should!"

BOOK II

I

The Hotel Marlborough stands at Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Sixth Place, facing the east and the promised land. Mrs. Wesley Slewter's smooth granite walls, red tiles, and slim chimneys are a bare hundred yards away. The elms of Millionaire's Row, whose leaves rustle of bank-notes, are within a stone's throw. Through their upper branches, from any front window of the Marlborough above the fourth story, one can see the mansard roof capping the wide old family mansion of the Dorwins, whose millions make a respectable figure even beside the hugest fortunes of New York and London, and who are now too rich to be at home more than a few weeks in the year. The long, straight line of Michigan Avenue, as it runs south, pares off a widening strip of the city along the lake shore. This strip is dotted with imposing dwellings, some in the Dutch style, some Colonial, but most in the Italian renaissance, where fortunes made in trade or won overnight in a lucky gamble spread themselves. Two blocks to the west of the avenue, State Street welters in its squalor,—a dismal thoroughfare of poor little shops, second-hand stores, junk-dealers, and dingy saloons. The asphalt in Twenty-Sixth Place runs only to State. Beyond, to the west, the Place is a mere muddy

ruck and wallow, staggering down to the railway tracks, — to an unexplored, verdureless region of grime, smoke, noise. The Marlborough turns a huge, indented back of unburned brick to this social wilderness. In fine weather, Mr. Julius Johnson, colored, whitewasher, sits in his shirt and trousers, in the dingy little back gallery to his State Street flat, surrounded by his numerous family. If times are good, he drinks beer out of a tin pail. He looks up at the high stern lights of the Marlborough, towering above him, as though it were a vast, stationary brick ship in whose majestic wake he sat, and whose bow lamps were forever making out the desired anchorage of Millionaire's Row.

The Marlborough looks wholly to the east. Its high and broad walls, of yellow brick on the south and east, inclose a large community which has been lifted out of the ruck, which has an outlook, socially and financially. With this common fact of a certain elevation and a certain outlook, this common point of view which comes of having turned one's back to the wilderness, the community ranges through a considerable sphere. It has instances of wealth, and others where the meeting of the board bills is a matter of fine arithmetic. Some of these families live here because they wish to travel a good deal, and find the keeping up of a house a bother. Most of them are here because with their incomes they can live more pretentiously at the hotel than they could in an establishment of their own. It is largely a woman's con-

trivance, — a convenient makeshift for those who think they get a better social chance here, who can put a better foot forward from this vantage ground, who can use the imposing front of the hotel to cover up the thin places in their incomes; for those who lack the energy and patience to manage a house and struggle with the one or two servants that they could afford; for those who revolt at household duties and wish to improve their minds. The Marlborough is strong on the side of culture. Dozens of its homeless women belong to the improving clubs. Having an outlook, it has the sense of social values. There is a decided difference, for example, between the Marlborough and the more exclusive Wessex Hotel, four blocks south, where the young matrons of the promised land give their six cotillions every winter, and which has not even a back door to the wilderness. There is also the difference between the Marlborough and the Lennox, four blocks north, which has a big bar-room in front and girls to serve in the dining-room.

The Marlborough is more than a social Mount Pisgah; more than merely on the further side of the wilderness. Some of its people are of the elect. At least, Mrs. Bertram Bartlett, president of the Culture Club, lives on the parlor floor, with her husband. No extent of red tiling can overtop her. The Worthingtons, mother and daughter, live modestly higher up; but they have a speaking acquaintance with many of the Italian renaissances, while in some of them they are quite at home. Gay little Mrs. Hollingshead, on the sixth floor,

gets her name in the society columns of the newspapers as often as Mrs. Wesley Slewter herself. There are young Squires and his wife, and the Dresslers, who are known; and the long, variegated list of merchants, brokers, professional men, and their families. The infant population is small. Babies are not desirable in the general scheme of living which finds its convenience in the hotel. If they come, the family often drops back to a more domestic scheme. A fair sprinkling of evening costumes may usually be counted upon in the big dining-room at dinner time. The service, although below the Wessex standard, is considered passable. The bell boys wear a uniform of olive green, with gold buttons and shoulder straps.

The tall boy who attends the side door on Twenty-Sixth Place — labeled "Ladies' Entrance" in neat gilt letters — saw the carriage swing up to the curb and ran out to open the carriage door. A young man with a neat red beard emerged and handed out a couple of bags; then reached his hand to a handsome young woman in a large hat with an owl's head upon it, and a fawn-colored jacket of the newness and stylishness of which she had a distinct consciousness.

Stepping out of the carriage upon the broad flagging, Eva glanced up at the high, imposing flank of the hotel. The October day was ending. As though in honor of their arrival, the arc lamp over the door hissed and blazed out its dead white light. Eva took a few steps down the flagging and looked about. On the opposite side of the street,

a square to the east, rose the smooth white granite walls and red top of Mrs. Wesley Slewter's house, and by that she identified the neighborhood. Three months before, she and Ernest Thompson had stood in the same spot looking over at the lordly dwelling, which had then seemed infinitely remote. Now, the thought that she was put on a neighborly footing with it gave her nerves a little shock. She was not at all embarrassed or apprehensive. She simply glanced about in a frank curiosity.

Following the boy, they entered the marble passage which led to a high, roofed court in the centre of the building. At each of the nine stories a gallery ran around this court. The long upward view disclosed the whole interior of the immense pile. Three ladies, bare-headed, in house dresses, were walking leisurely along one of the galleries. Higher up, a man lounged against the rail, glancing down. In the centre of the court, a life-size marble statue gleamed through a tiny grove of palms, set in tubs. The clerk's little marble desk was at one side of the statue. Looking at all this, Eva stepped closer to Philip instinctively, scarcely knowing that she did so. The view produced an impression on her mind, — surprise, a sort of awe, and a subtle, half-doubting elation. It seemed imposing, rich, elegant, exclusive. She had an odd mystifying, half-doubting sense of her life having suddenly wheeled out into a spacious, luxurious, elevated place, a kind of fairyland, where jobs and wages were unknown. They entered the elevator and rose by swiftly unfolding vistas of long, still

corridors, thickly carpeted. When they stepped out, her glance dropped down the deep court. They were nearly at the top. A boy led the way down the hall, applied his key to a door, swinging it open, stepped in, and touched a button. The room sprang into light. It was not a large room; but it was unsparingly furnished. There was a centre table with a tall bronze lamp upon it and a green cord running from the lamp to the electrolier; a lounge in the corner piled with bright colored cushions, and over it a little canopy of red silk; a combined bookcase and writing-desk, elaborately ornamented, but now empty of books, one very long slim rocking-chair with a leather back, a Roman chair which she did not know by name, and some others; a fire screen before the clean grate; polished brass tongs and fire shovel tied with ribbons.

Eva stood on the threshold looking slowly around. Marvin was about to speak, — to crack a joke at the prancing cupids which upheld the bronze lamp, at the flight of the geese across the fire screen. But something in her face held his tongue. Her eye caught the open door beside the bookcase. She stepped over and peered into a tiny hall, then looked over her shoulder at Philip, the surprise deepened in her face.

"Why — do we have all this?" she asked.

"The whole hotel, including the statue," said Marvin gayly.

"No — but" — she peered again into the hall — "here are a lot of other rooms!"

Philip sat down and laughed. "Go on! Go on! Explore!" he called.

She looked back at him doubtfully, as though she still vaguely suspected a joke; then went resolutely into the hall. On the left was a bedroom with much blue in it and a brass bedstead, snowily spread and adorned at the head with some blue ribbons in large bows. On the right there was a smaller room with a folding bed, two or three plain chairs, and a little table. On the right also there was a bathroom with a white tile floor, a porcelain tub, and polished nickel-plated plumbing. She went over all the rooms, opening some of the drawers in the bedroom bureau, standing on tiptoe to look on the shelves in the two tiny closets, turning back the starched pillow shams to feel the bedding, and trying the water taps in the bathroom. She spent many minutes in her exploration. All the time a certainty was growing in her mind. Surely this was real; it was for her. She had, in a stronger way, that odd mystifying sense of having wheeled out into a broader, richer life. A kind of dreamy content possessed her mind.

She came back, smiling a little in acknowledgment of the joke that Philip would probably have at her expense.

"Well, did you conclude you 'd stay?" he asked.

She came over and sat on his knee. "I had no idea it would be like this," she confessed.

Marvin laughed. "Well, why did n't you come with me to look at it? Then you 'd have known."

"Why" — she hesitated a moment, with down-

cast eyes. "I did n't want to look at it, Phil. I thought it was going to be just a hotel, — with a bed and a bureau and a place for a trunk. And if I came to see it before we took it, I was afraid it would make me sort of homesick because it would n't be like any place that was our own — like a home" —

"But, my dear girl! Why did n't you tell me all this?"

"Well, I did say all I ought to. Because, really, Phil, you know it would n't have made so much difference to me after we 'd taken it and it was all settled. I could get along well enough anywhere. I don't think I 'm likely to be discontented. You seemed set on the hotel, so I would n't say any more. But this" — She turned her head to look around again. Expression failed her for a moment. Then the happiness, the surprise, the elation, exploded in irrepressible gayety. "Why, this is just scrumptious!"

They laughed together. The expression comforted her. It let off the tension. Her spirits expanded. When they went to dinner, she insisted upon climbing the stairs, just to see how it would be to go that way, instead of waiting for the elevator.

At the broad dining-room door the usher lifted a portentous hand and led them down a long aisle of tables to one against the wall, which they had to themselves. It was a large, high room, full of lights, and Eva had the simple joy of a child at a Christmas tree. Going back to their apartment, she

stopped to look down the court, and called Philip to come and see how deep it was. In the corridor, she brushed her feet over the thick carpet. She caught her husband's hand.

"Come on; let 's skate!" she cried, and pulled him along as she ran, and slid over the carpet.

In their apartment she went again on that exploring expedition through the four small rooms, tucking his hand under her arm, making him come along and admire. Her housewifely passion of possession finally even infected him a little. He tried the water taps, and admitted that the closets were capital. A new perception of these things dawned upon him. He had bought some of the worst of the furnishings out of hand of the retiring tenants in order to get possession at once. When that little woman had shown the things off to him, bragging of her gilt clock, her fire screen with its geese, her brass shovels tied with blue ribbons, he thought she was merely trying to get a better bargain out of him. But now, in the light of his own wife's passion, he saw this was not true; that the fat-legged cupids, the three-cornered geese, the brass shovel, had been really remarkable and precious to the little woman because they were her things, parts of her home, mysteriously different from mere merchandise. He wished he had bought the gilt clock for Eva, too. Even when he joked her, he was happy in her content. At any rate, he was giving her something like what she deserved; he was, at last, treating her fairly.

Finally, he sat down to look through the evening

papers. Eva stood awhile by the broad windows, dreaming down at the street and the farther roofs and treetops. They were near the front of the hotel, and their apartment looked north. Directly below this window stretched something like half an acre of flat gravel roof, with water tanks, electric wire poles, and chimneys on it. Even this view interested Eva. To the east she could dimly see the elms and the mansard of the Dorwins. It came over her anew, — what a strange place for her to be in, living this way like an aristocrat!

She came back to Philip's chair, full of gratitude to him, in her happiness; devoting herself to him anew for the pleasure he was giving her.

She slipped down to the arm of the chair. "I think you 're a good boy, Phil, to give me all this; I never had anything nice like it before," she said soberly; and in a moment, her eyes shining, "I think we 're going to be very happy, don't you?"

The man had his own content. He was happy to have pleased her. Her gratitude appeased his bad conscience. For the first time he felt fully at ease.

To both of them, mysteriously, this huge and solid pile of brick seemed to put a firm foundation under their venture. This imposing and elaborate establishment seemed to inclose their free union as in an enduring frame. The hotel's air of an elevated propriety gave a stamp of authorization to their unauthorized marriage. They seemed to have come out on solid ground.

II

They had their honeymoon. Their happiness infected the world so that it refused to stay sober, and they ran about laughing at it. They knew nobody, but they did not wish to know anybody. It was enough to know each other. Scarcely an evening was spent at home. They made appointments to meet down town and take dinner in a restaurant; they went to the theatre, the English opera, a twenty-cent variety show, — any place where this gay, light-headed world could perform for them. If the night was stormy, they came home in a cab.

But this could not last. Eva took her irresponsible man in hand finally, and demonstrated it with a lead pencil on the back of an envelope. There was thirty-five dollars a week to the hotel, besides the laundry and incidentals. They had rather let themselves go in the matter of clothes. The theatre tickets, the cab hire, the dinner and supper down town, counted up enormously. Plainly, it would not do. Philip grumbled at her economy, — that ingrained rustic instinct which made debts, extravagance, money disorders, a sort of sin to her. But she led him as easily as a fat, tame bear. There were the books. She bought a Morris chair, and arranged the centre table for his comfort in read-

ing. Her bear took the bait whole. Merely glancing at the cover of several new untouched volumes, he owned their lure. The bookish passion, long neglected, roused within him. After all, running around nightly to poor plays might be something of a bore. Besides, there was here an atmosphere which invited him to stretch out his legs and soak his mind in content. That long fever of unhappiness was soothed away. Here was peace, comfort, quiet. He knew that she had made it for him, and he was grateful to her. But it was just the atmosphere for a man to enjoy reading in.

When Eva unpacked Philip's books, she had stopped at the set of Shakespeare. Sitting in the middle of the floor, a big apron pinned over her dress, a feather duster beside her, she had reverently opened the volumes one after another, glancing at some of the titles and pictures, with an odd secret glow in her heart. It was here she would begin in that humbly ambitious ascent toward the high things of Philip's mind.

Now, she sat over on the bedizened lounge, a volume in her lap open at the "Tempest." But for the last three quarters of an hour the Bard had been particularly trying. The lines refused to hold together. She took up the book again; but it was no use. She could not remember anything that had the least connection with the scene she was reading. She glanced at the small nickel clock on the mantel. It was twenty minutes to eleven. Philip was sprawling in the Morris chair beside the centre table, his long legs thrust far out, his

hair tumbled. It was two hours and a half since he had moved, except to slide lower and sprawl wider in the chair or to relight his cigar. Eva slipped over to the table noiselessly and got the morning's newspaper. She looked through the bargain advertisements and read the "Short Story of the Day." Presently she put up the window curtain, and for some time sat looking out at the sky and the twinkling lights of the nether firmament.

"It 's awfully late, Phil," she said.

The man grumbled something unintelligibly, in his abstraction. He finished the chapter as the clock struck eleven, and put down the book with a contented sigh. He stood up, beaming vaguely at her, full of the satisfaction of his long, comfortable evening and his book.

"Well, it 's pretty good here at home after all, is n't it?" he said, beaming.

She looked at him a moment as though she might take an exception. Then she laughed softly, came over, still laughing, and put her arm around him.

"You 're just a man," she said; "stuff you full and make you comfortable, and everything is lovely."

He caught the implication; but it seemed as much a joke to him as to her.

"Well, what did you think I was?" he demanded, smiling and pinching her cheek.

"I thought maybe you was a human being," she said, and they laughed together. Philip ac-

cepted the indictment. Put in that way, it seemed a very comfortable basis.

They had their talks. There was a letter from Sarah, the first since their marriage, and a second from Eva's father. Eva was full of the project of a visit to Hopeville when Philip should take his vacation in the summer. She even got a time table, and found just what train they would take and when it would reach Hopeville. Philip indulged her, good naturedly, in this, although Nebraska did not seem an ideal place for a vacation, and the two laboriously written, misspelled letters from the father which she gave him to read evoked a certain reluctance. However, summer was a long way off.

Their talks, in which mainly she talked and he listened, began to fill up with the hotel. He perceived that the Bard by no means monopolized her attention. Her irrepressible instinct for sociability, her instant interest in human things, began running out and exercising itself over this big hotel community. He never knew how she made her acquaintances. Almost the first day she knew Mrs. Barnum, the plump wife of a young stockbroker, who had the apartment across the hall.

She pointed out Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Bartlett, — a little red-headed man with snapping eyes, and a large woman, who seemed to have more bones than she needed, with thin, straw-colored hair and a broad, flat blonde face.

"Mrs. Barnum says she is just lovely when you know her," Eva commented, her eyes following

the august figure. "Mrs. Barnum and I met her at the door yesterday, and when Mrs. Barnum bowed, she spoke as pleasantly as anybody." Eva seemed to cherish a kind of surprise over the fact. "It is n't easy to know her, though. Mrs. Barnum says she won't take any off-hand introductions. She said that to explain why she did n't introduce me to her. I don't think that was very good taste, do you? But Mrs. Barnum is a real good little body. Her husband was a clerk until he made a lot of money in the stock market. Then he set up for himself. And soon after they came to the hotel, he lost some money on Linseed Oil stock, — is there such a thing? — so Mrs. Barnum don't go out much and don't know many people. I guess Mrs. Bartlett is a sort of trump card with her, though she knows her just to speak to — never gets invited there. I 'm awfully sort of sorry for her, — getting upset that way just when she was well started. She 's a good soul."

As they sat late at dinner in the nearly empty dining-room, a mite of a boy came slipping and dodging between the tables in a sort of elfin dance, the objective of which was plainly Eva. He was a tiny fellow, about four years old. His long brown curls and his dress had a Little Lord Fauntleroy effect; but there was no Fauntleroy in his small, dark, eager, nervous face. He slipped to the end of a table and peered at Eva around the curtain of the tablecloth, with a little child's odd self-consciousness. He waited a moment, slipped to the next table, and looked again. Eva was looking

at him all the time. In her shining eyes, in the way she smiled at the elf, Philip saw another power to love which subtly put her in a higher place. The boy came to the table next them, peered out, encountered Philip's smiling eyes, and drew back abashed. For a moment they waited, he twisting the tablecloth across his face and shrinking out of their sight in his childish diffidence. Then Eva left her place. Philip watched her beautiful stooping figure as she half knelt before the child; their little whispering parley. Her hands reached out. In a moment she stood up, holding him in her arms, and came back to the table. As she sat down, the bashful child lifted his head from her shoulder and glanced shyly around her neck at Philip. Those childish eyes looked at him as at a stranger, and the man read in them, with an odd, swift touch of loneliness, a possession of Eva in which he had no share.

When the maid, who was busy talking with the usher, came over and claimed the child, Eva explained that it was Mrs. Hollingshead's little boy.

"She 's an awfully stylish woman," said Eva; "a good deal more stylish than Mrs. Bartlett. But Mrs. Barnum says she is n't so fashionable. Mrs. Barnum says Mrs. Bartlett goes in lots the best society; but Mrs. Hollingshead goes in good society, too. I guess she is n't so thick with them, though. She cuts up a good deal, Mrs. Barnum says. I don't think it 's nice to have a child go around with a maid all the time, especially when you live in a hotel and don't have any house-

work to do — do you? Little Theodore goes around with the maid all the time," she went on, "and the maid 's in love with Truax, the usher, and I know she don't pay any attention to Theodore. Twice I 've had him up with me half the afternoon. You 've seen Mrs. Hollingshead? She 's mighty pretty. And her husband, that tall, solemn-looking man with gray hair, though he is n't old at all." She lowered her voice. "They say he drinks!"

Philip laughed so long that she was vexed.

He was scarcely surprised when she introduced him, off-hand, to the Worthingtons. It seemed to him that the surprise was quite with Mrs. Worthington. He thought he felt in that elderly woman's air a sort of frostiness respecting this haphazard sociability. Evidently the daughter had no reluctance. The introduction happened in the wide corridor on the top floor next the dining-room. This was one of the social commons of the establishment, and some of the more hardy of the guests loitered there after dinner to hear the mechanical organ which performed somewhere in the middle regions of the hotel. The Worthingtons were on the gallery that overlooked the deep court. The mother had gray hair and was inclined to a dignified stoutness. The daughter had a comfortable largeness of figure which had not yet definitely renounced youthful symmetry and grace. Her face attracted by its intelligence and comely wholesomeness; even her manner of peering near-sightedly through her eyeglasses was pleasant.

She turned to Philip at the introduction with an instant readiness, which suggested a sort of hardy adeptness in social encounters.

"We are trying to guess — Is the organ a subtle temptation to sociability?" she said. "Was that the management's plan? Do you think they will move it up slowly, a story at a time, and gradually blow us into a sort of social solidarity with it? Perhaps the end will be something quite French, — a table d'hôte under the strains of Sousa's marches."

Her dark eyes were oddly attractive. As she bent slightly toward him, smiling, peering through her glasses, he saw that what seemed an indefinitely intimate motion was in fact only her near-sighted attempts to get him in a better focus, and he came a little closer to her. In the movement of the group in the gallery they had got somewhat apart from Mrs. Worthington and Eva.

"I wonder we have n't had the table d'hôte before. You know, they have it everywhere down town. Only the other day, when I was crossing Clark Street, I saw an immense canvas sign before a restaurant: 'Regular French table d'hôte dinner, with glass of wine, thirty cents.'" She bent forward, her dark, near-sighted eyes resting upon Philip, her parted lips showing a row of beautiful teeth in a deep, silent relish of the joke. He noticed that there were a few white lines in her brown hair, and her face, though fresh and comely, was plainly that of a woman about thirty.

"Perhaps I should n't have been able to resist

it," she went on, "only I had tried it once. Last spring, when we had been at the hotel only a week or two, I saw an announcement in the newspaper that the Washington restaurant would serve a table d'hôte dinner. We 'd been on this side only a month"— The smooth, nicely modulated flow of her voice ceased a bare second, and in that second her slightly smiling, amiable glance seemed to question his red beard and his brown, contemplative eyes for a more definite assurance of European experience.

"If one likes it over there, I fancy even the names make one a little homesick at times," she ventured, with a kind of quiet smiling which seemed to confess her own touches of homesickness.

Philip's face lighted with a ready sympathy. "I only spent three months there, and ran around a good deal then," he said; "but I can easily understand that."

"Yes!" She took up her story again in a way that was subtly more personal, as though they were on a new ground. "You know, I dragooned mamma into going to the restaurant. It was something dreadful! We went into a big restaurant full of little tables, and were solemnly led over to seats all by ourselves against the wall. Presently a waiter came up in a great hurry, and handed us bills of fare. I asked him if they had a table d'hôte dinner. He said, 'Yes, sure! we give it alley carty or tally-ho suit yourself!' I dare say we 're coming to that here."

They were talking of Paris when it dawned

upon Philip that the music had ceased, and he noticed that Eva and Mrs. Worthington were trying, with indifferent success, to keep up a sort of conversation.

"If you rinse it in cold water before you wash it, the colors won't run," Eva was saying.

Mrs. Worthington was murmuring, "I had n't heard of that."

Philip and Miss Worthington kept up their talk down the first flight of stairs. The Worthingtons lived on the floor below. Eva was silent as she and Philip walked along the hall to their own apartment.

He was getting down his book when she asked, with a somewhat elaborate air of its being incidental: "Do you think Miss Worthington is a bright woman?"

"Oh, yes!" said Philip heartily, and with a relish for it. "She is a remarkably bright woman." Comfortably seated in the Morris chair, and smoking leisurely, he wasted a moment before he opened the book, as though he were engaged with pleasant thoughts. "By Jove! she seems to have been everywhere," he observed, as though the fact pleased him; and he added: "She has a fine mind."

They saw a good deal of Miss Worthington. It occurred to Eva that nearly everybody saw a good deal of her. She seemed to know everybody whom she wished to know, and Eva dimly recognized that her own plain, hearty gift of sociability was a rude and poor affair compared with this

highly organized, highly discriminative talent. They met constantly in the hall, or at luncheon, or elsewhere. At first Miss Worthington turned the talk in unpromising directions.

"Would n't one's mind entirely disintegrate if the organ persisted in playing Verdi during luncheon? Some things were so ludicrous that they threw everything else out of perspective."

"A fog! Were n't they in a way the saddest things in Chicago? One cherished the London fog because some way one could feel it to be full of St. Paul's and Shakespeare and the Tower and Whitehall, like a palpable historic atmosphere in which one got nearer to some things than in the sunshine. But this white mist, one could see, came off a raw land that the hand of man had never touched."

"Dear mother! She reads 'Modern Painters' and the 'Seven Lamps' to-day, and does n't know that a single lamp had gone out!"

The fine mind soon found the impossibility of these leads. Very well, she would talk of fashion, domestic economy, of the chops, of the tablecloth. She stepped into the apartment with Eva one day on the way from luncheon, and spent fifteen minutes over the dress that had just come from the maker's. Little Theodore, slipping from the maid, who was again busy with the usher, ran over to Eva. Miss Worthington was full of interest. She could n't get on well with children. She did n't know how to take them. No doubt it was a special gift.

III

For some minutes Eva had been looking down at the small sheet of thick pearl gray note-paper and the large square envelope. Two or three times she picked up the note and looked over all four of the pages. She even examined the little seal on the back of the envelope and the superscription, "To Mr. and Mrs. Philip Marvin." The note itself, in a long, slanting hand, asked dear Mr. and Mrs. Marvin to come to a "Sunday afternoon," which would be very small and informal. The "Anne Worthington" at the bottom, in the long, slanting hand, seemed more gracious than the amiable young lady herself had ever seemed, and the heart of her dear Mrs. Marvin softened and warmed toward those distinguished-looking characters in a way it had never been quite able to do toward the writer herself.

She handed Philip the note the moment he got home. He glanced it over.

"Oh, yes. Well, that will be interesting. Of course we 'll go." He glanced down at her. "You wish to, don't you?"

"Why — yes." She looked down, and he saw she had something on her mind. "I think it would be pleasant." She took the note nervously from his hand. "What ought I to wear?"

"Wear?" he repeated, in mild, masculine surprise. "Why, it does n't matter, — Sunday afternoon and informal, right here in the hotel. Anything becoming will do."

She seemed not to heed him. "I was in to see Mrs. Barnum. I thought maybe she 'd be going, and if she was, I could ask her what she was going to wear. But I guess she ain't going — and I don't know" — She broke off anxiously.

"Why, anything will do. It does n't matter what you wear," he assured her.

"But it does matter, Philip," she insisted, rather hotly, and he knew from her nervous tension that it did matter. That strong temper of hers could come up on occasion. "I must wear something, and it ought to be what the other women wear."

He felt the thin ice under his feet and answered meekly: "Well, I suppose that 's so." Then by an inspiration: "Your tailor-made gown will be just the thing."

The temper fell instantly. "Do you think it will, dear?" she asked humbly.

"Certainly," he replied stoutly.

"And should I wear a hat?" She was meekness itself now.

"Oh, why a hat? It 's just downstairs." His sense of humor rose as her temper subsided.

"But if the other women wear hats," she suggested. "If it 's right to wear one, we could take a walk and go right in from outdoors, I with my hat on."

"And I with my ulster, the collar turned up, and my fur cap turned down over my ears!" The laugh that had been waiting for clear weather burst out, and he caught her hands. "It don't matter, dear girl. We 'll just go down as we are. You could n't be far wrong, whatever you wore. It won't be any court function. You 'll be the prettiest woman there, whether you wear a wrapper or a mackintosh!"

As usual, she laughed with him. On the heels of the laugh she put up her hand and began smoothing the lapel of his coat, with a touch in which he felt nervous agitation, even a slight tremulousness.

"You know, dear, this time I want to wear just what will look right," she said in a low voice.

At once he caught the significance of the thing to her, — a sort of epochal importance. They had the hotel, with the material grandeur of which she was now on an easy, every-day footing. But this invitation was something much greater. Was it not the opening of a door? The very superscription, "To Mr. and Mrs. Philip Marvin," — was not that a sort of certificate of regularity handed out by the mysterious and puissant body, "Society"?

These were things which, naturally, they could not well discuss with each other. They had made their compact, and must accept it in good faith. Eva believed that she was justified. Her love, her generosity, her sacrifice, must justify her. If she had the feeling, down in the bottom of her mind,

that however much she might be justified, it was after all a rebellion, a potential act of outlawry, it was obviously best to keep that to herself. If in the bottom of her mind there were some things, unrevealed to Philip except before their union, and having mainly to do with the question of children, these things were obviously not good subjects for discussion between them now.

But here, after all, she was being accepted in all hands. Every time she was accepted as Mrs. Philip Marvin, she was so much the more Mrs. Philip Marvin; and Miss Worthington's acceptance was incomparably the most important, the most significant, of them all. She felt the ground growing solid under her feet.

When the maid let them into the hall of the Worthingtons' apartment, two gentlemen were trying to find a place for their hats and coats on the overflowing hall-tree and a heaped chair. This fact vaguely comforted Eva, and relaxed the tension on her nerves, as though the affair could not be so tremendously formidable if the gentlemen could find no place for their hats. When one of the gentlemen made his coat into a roll and dropped it in the corner, she felt almost at ease; her faint hope in Miss Worthington's assurance of informality glowed up. There was some further reassurance in the first glance, which showed that the apartment, though much larger, was really not so well furnished as her own. There was neither a bronze lamp with cupids nor a fire screen.

The two rooms, spacious for a family hotel, were lighted by many candles in pink shades. There was a wide arched doorway between. A crowd of people stood about, talking and drinking tea. The soft light of the candles, the long black coats of the men, the wide, murmurous stir of talk, had decidedly a society aspect; but from Eva's point of view it looked simple enough. They encountered Mrs. Worthington near the door, and were introduced into a little group. In a moment, by some mysterious property of its own, the group dissolved. Philip was disappearing with two young women. In the dissolution Eva hastily stepped to one side, lest she should be left companionless in the centre of the floor, and when the movement was over she found herself neatly marooned against the wall, beside a tall plant under a candle. She caught a glimpse of Philip's broad shoulders disappearing in the second room. She glanced out at the crowd of strangers and tried to look interested and pleasant.

A plump, stubby young man, to whom she had been introduced in the group, saw her there, promptly dropped the elderly lady to whom he was talking, and came over to her. As she saw him coming, Eva tried to remember his name. She thought it was Carlton. He was rather under her own height, and his round, red face looked so hard and ruddy, like a ripe apple, that when he smiled over at her it was as though he were merely laughing at his own good nature.

"Can I talk to you about horses?" he said

as he came up to her. "These people of Miss Worthington's are all for books and pictures and music, and morbid things of that kind. My three-year-old went a mile in 2.13 yesterday, but I can't get anybody to listen to it."

Eva was smiling in sympathy with his good humor; but there was a sudden flashing suspicion. "You mean Betsy B!" she exclaimed, for she had read it in the Sunday newspapers.

"Why, certainly!" chuckled the man. He smiled so broadly that a round dimple came in each chubby cheek. In spite of herself, Eva looked a little grave, for she understood now that this was William Berry Carlton, son of the very rich clothing merchant. To find herself talking with that distinguished person gave her an odd sensation, as of being in the very shadow of the rose. She then conceived another suspicion, namely, that some other of these people might also be celebrities, wearers of names that figured in the society columns of the newspapers, personages invested with the purple. She looked about. Yes, there was Mrs. Bertram Bartlett herself, over there by the door; and, gracious Heavens! — she realized it with a little shock, — it was Philip who was talking to her and gallantly relieving her of an empty teacup. Carlton bubbled on with his irrepressible good humor. She tried to keep up the talk with him, at the same time glancing about for the persons whom she knew by sight, guessing who some of the others might be, aware of the amiable, decorous society air made by the shaded

lights, the men in their long black coats, the stir and rustle of people, the sound of talk. Other people were coming in. The two rooms were quite full.

Here was gay little Mrs. Hollingshead, just come in, — and evidently from outdoors, for her small, trim, graceful person was topped by a hat with waving plumes. She had dark eyes under straight brows, and a straight, delicate little nose. There was an air of gay sauciness about her, and she was so pretty that Eva helplessly had to love whenever she saw her. This pretty young woman saw the pair by the wall, sailed up to them, briskly held out her hand to Mr. Carlton, and said: "Hello, Billy."

She encountered Eva's slight smile, which so plainly made the tender of sociability; smiled in return with a kind of roguishness; said, "Oh, how do you do?" continued smiling for an instant; then frankly held out her hand.

"Mrs. Marvin is my only friend," said Carlton, "she knows about Betsy B."

"What will she be when she finds out about Nellie B?" said Mrs. Hollingshead. It struck Eva that the roguish smile was a little wicked; and from that and Mr. Carlton's momentary embarrassment, a vaguely unpleasant suggestion touched her mind. But the talk went on. Mrs. Hollingshead's prettiness carried off her boldness. She spoke of Mrs. Slewter as the "grand old girl." She said of Mr. Bertram Bartlett: "I believe he's gnawed off his string: I don't see his wife anywhere."

Some of her comments made Eva feel a little hot and uncomfortable on account of Mr. Carlton, but she had to laugh at them; and after all they did not seem so bad because of this modish woman's beautiful teeth, the liquid light in her dark, saucy eyes, the smoothness of her clear white skin, the grace of her pretty figure. It was like the naughtiness of a baby.

"That's your husband, is n't it?" she said to Eva. Philip's big shoulders and bearded face were conspicuous in the midst of a group in the second room. "You must have him well trained; he talks only to the plainest women."

"Oh, no!" Eva laughed. "To prove it, I 'll bring him over and introduce him to you."

Mrs. Hollingshead showed her beautiful teeth. "He looks too sober-minded," she commented.

The reply relieved Eva. It seemed to dismiss the offer which she had made as a joke. She had noticed Philip many times. He seemed to have found a congenial group, for he had not moved recently. It would have been embarrassing to her to cross the room and speak to him.

The group in the second room behind the tiny tea table changed from time to time as one member turned away and another came up. But it preserved a kind of permanence in the shifting and stirring of the guests. Miss Worthington joined it from time to time. Its nucleus was a lean, elderly, homely man, with the look of an invalid, who sat in an easy chair, — Burroughs, whom Philip knew of indefinitely as a painter, without know-

ing any of his works, or whether in fact he had any.

"I can give you two hands, but not a foot," he had said to Philip, smiling, when Miss Worthington introduced him, and the painter reached up to shake hands without rising. His invalidism was evidently taken for granted by those who knew him and came up to shake hands with him, sitting.

The charming homeliness of his face had strongly attracted Philip at the first glance. The deeply wrinkled, beardless skin looked like old leather. The mouth was inordinately wide; the nose large and crooked; the chin long and receding. But this homely face was like a mask of good humor.

Philip was quick to perceive a fine sympathy, a complete understanding, between this elderly man and Miss Worthington, — one of those friendships in which age and sex scarcely count. There were other women about the painter's chair, — plump, plain Mrs. Sexton, who had a kind of practical, motherly effect, out of which shone a sound, able intelligence, — the wife of the banker, Philip understood, and from one of the Italian renaissances to the east; the dark and graceful Miss Byron, who brought everything back to Omar Khayyám. There were men, too, — Gregory, a slim young painter, with a beard that matched Philip's; Mr. Hollingshead, who tried ineffectually to talk politics. There was an air among these people which excited and lured Philip's mind. It was not so much the talk itself, which, in fact, flew everywhere. It was an effect of familiarity with

things which interested him, — books, music, pictures; of cultivated interests; of an intellectual companionship. Hints were flashed of the shop-gossip of studios. Mrs. Sexton, just from Europe, was telling how Mascagni impressed her and what he said. At Milan they said of him — Gregory had a new story of Whistler, from first-hands. This phlegmatic and foreign-looking man with the black beard, whom Philip did not know, had spent four days with Tolstoi in the summer. There was respectful silence when he spoke in his broken English.

Philip listened, finding himself able to say a word now and then, drawn in conversation with one or another of the people who came up, while others were claimed and taken away. The stir of old interests and pleasures was in his mind, stimulating, exciting, attracting him. The people seemed charming. He looked now and then to the other room, reluctant to move, lest he should find himself thrown back upon stupid things. Now and then he saw Eva, who seemed to be enjoying herself.

Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Hollingshead were going. That gay young woman glanced at Eva a second, measuring her. "I 'm going to come up and take you driving," she announced.

Mr. Carlton laughed back at her. "Best do the driving yourself, if she does," he warned.

When they were gone, Eva stood a moment alone, slightly smiling, a glow, an elation in her mind. How pleasant these people were! And Mrs. Hol-

lingshead was going to take her driving! She could not help a little sense of triumph. Philip came up.

"Well, did you have a good time?" he asked, as soon as they were in the corridor.

"Oh, yes!" She began telling him about Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Hollingshead. "She 's coming to take me out riding."

Her pleasure was so evident that Philip's own pleasure increased. Out of happy good nature he forbore to make an observation concerning "Billy" Carlton and gay Mrs. Hollingshead which came to his mind. After all, if Eva thought them so important, why not let her?

In their apartment, laughing, half in his own pleasure and half at her pleasure, he gayly passed his arm around her waist. "I see that you 're going to be a society woman, a howling swell!" he cried. "And nobody cast aspersions upon the tailor-made?" He laughed outright, pulling her against him.

"No, sir. The tailor-made was all right!"

She laughed as gayly as he did. The anxious doubts respecting the dress now seemed amusing. In fact, everything was amusing. Her mind overflowed with happiness, under which lay a deeper joy. For now she seemed fully accepted, the ground absolutely solid beneath her feet. An irrevocable amnesty had been granted to her rebellion.

IV

It came about in the most simple and natural way, fairly arranging itself without anybody's help, that the Marvins deserted their own little table in the dining-room and took seats at the table with the Worthingtons. It was, of course, rather absurd to be talking over one's shoulder. Eva recognized that; and when she found that, without prearrangement, they were sitting with the Worthingtons rather oftener than by themselves, she made no objection. There was really nothing to object to. The talk very often left her out, or left her to the polite attention of Mrs. Worthington. But she admired Philip's cleverness as the cleverness of Miss Worthington brought it out. She had an odd, belligerent pride in the fact that this accomplished young woman could not talk over Philip's head, any way. It was a bit hard, sometimes — to be left out. But she took herself resolutely in hand. It would be mean to be jealous. She looked at Philip, — at his heroic size, the goodness of his bearded face with its absent-minded impracticalness, — and whispered over in her heart: "This is my good Philip, whom I love; this is my fat, tame bear, who needs only to be stuffed in order to be kept good natured; and Miss Worthington is just another way of stuffing him."

The days passed smoothly. On one of them Philip came home smiling.

"I 've got a letter from father, dear, about our coming out there," said Eva. She handed him the cheap envelope, superscribed in Mr. Crawford's sprawling, uncertain characters.

Philip looked down at it with an absent-minded good nature.

"Oh, yes. What does he say?" he asked.

"Why, of course he wants us to come. You can read it."

"Yes — all right. I 'll read it after dinner." He laid the letter on the centre table, and hurried to prepare for dinner.

Burroughs, the painter, was with the Worthingtons. Eva wondered if Philip had known he would be there, and if that was why he was so eager to get to the dining-room.

The talk kept them at the table long after Eva had finished her coffee, — even after she had counted all the squares in the border of the wall-paper on two sides of the room.

When they came back to the apartment, Philip had forgotten all about the letter from Nebraska. Oddly enough it occurred to him next day in the office, and his mind started in a guilty shock. Of course that letter had been very important to Eva. How stupid of him to have forgotten it! Why had she not called his attention to it again? Naturally she had her pride, and he had wounded it. How stupid of him! He was full of contrition, all the more as he had not used her exactly right.

That is, it looked a little ungracious to go off three evenings running without her to hear the art talk of the famous sojourning French painter. Being in French, Eva naturally would not wish to go; and she was such a good fellow that she took everything sensibly. Nevertheless, it had an ungracious look. And this stupidity of the letter —

He perceived that his pleasant engagement with his Burroughs, his Worthington, and that set put him in an awkward position in respect of Eva's engagement with her Hollingshead, her Carlton, and that set. Everybody knew what Billy Carlton was, — a good fellow, perhaps, in his snub-nosed and breech-clouted sort; but his name figured in certain stories that were not yet forgotten. As to gay Mrs. Hollingshead, Philip was singularly impervious to that young matron's charms. She seemed quite too gay.

Coming home one afternoon, finding the front room empty and entering the tiny hall, he was arrested by Eva's voice from the bedroom.

"You 're not to come in here, Phil!" she warned. "Go away; the dress has come and I 'm putting it on. Now, Phil! I want you to see it all at once. Then you can say, really and truly, whether you like it."

He waited dutifully, therefore, in the front room, until she came forth, in a soft gown of pale pink that gave her splendid figure its best advantage. Her beautiful arms and shoulders were bare. Her shining hair was piled high on her head. She stopped at the threshold, holding up her chin, her

body bent slightly forward, looking at him with a slight smile in which there was a kind of self-conscious triumph, although it begged his approval. But with Philip it was something more. He was surprised at her beauty. It was as though his handsome Eva had bloomed into something rarer; as though his humble Valkyrie had at once found her armor and her sisterhood. It occurred to him that this woman might command a masculine world. This florescence of loveliness seemed some way not quite for him. Perhaps his attitude was expressed in the fact that he rather carefully put his hands in his pockets as he stood before her, approving and complimenting.

"Really? Is it just right?" she asked eagerly. She smoothed the soft fabric over her hips, with a sort of affection for it, and turned slowly before the glass, looking it all over again.

"My! I never expected to have anything so nice!" she said presently, with a deep sigh of content. "Now, if I only get through the dinner all right and don't eat with my knife!" She laughed, and flung herself against him and hugged him. Then quickly started away. "Gracious! I got some powder on your coat." She wiped it off with her tiny lace handkerchief. "I suppose if I 'm going to be a bang-up lady, I must learn not to hug my husband when I 'm dressed up."

Nevertheless, though she asked some questions, Philip saw that she was not so nervous about this great test of the Hollingsheads' dinner as she had been about the much simpler affair of Miss

Worthington's afternoon. She was finding her armor.

To be sure, there were instants of weakness.

"I feel dreadfully — kind of bare," she said to Philip in a sudden conscientious qualm, as she looked at herself in the glass for the last time before they left the apartment.

At the table she gave several dubious sidelong glances at the long-stemmed glass full of yellow wine before she could make up her mind to raise it to her lips. She sipped, and held her breath an instant. But beyond the sensation of tasting something sourish, nothing whatever happened. When the champagne came on, she felt a pleasurable hardiness and assurance in respect of it.

The dinner was served in Mrs. Hollingshead's sitting-room. Necessarily, there were some makeshifts; and with only a dozen persons at the table there was not too much room. But to Eva it seemed splendid.

Mr. Carlton was telling how the storm wrecked their fishing camp. He could tell anything of that kind with a droll good humor that was irresistible. Others were listening, but the story was particularly for Eva. He put his elbow on the table and turned his round, shiny face toward her. She leaned back in her chair, laughing. All the time she had a singularly complete sense of the scene, — of this jolly man beside her, with all his money, who was doing his best to entertain her; of the dozen people around the table in their dinner clothes; of the two mute darkies who were disappearing with

some empty plates ; of the flowers in the room ; of the candles on the table ; of herself in the midst of all this, happy, free, admired, a joy singing in her blood and her brain. It flashed upon her that this, too, was Sam Crawford's daughter, from Hopeville, from the publishing house, from Cobb's Café ! Her dress itself, unlike any she had ever worn before, baring her shoulders, was part of the joy, as though it was a new social investiture. The broad white shirt bosoms of the men, with their fine black coats, the bare arms and shoulders of the women, in their pretty gowns, exactly belonged in the picture. These men and women about the table were so jolly, so free ; they seemed to come so near to one another in their friendliness, their amiable wish to entertain ; they were so unconstrained, — everything had to her perception the stamp of high authority, of social propriety. Even this bubbling wine, of which she had been half afraid, drinking it but sparingly, now seemed good and right, an innocent means to happiness. She could feel it sunning in her brain, singing in her heart, a gay effervescence of the happy goodwill. She knew that she was a success. The men were eager to entertain her. She who was always so ready to enjoy, so open to happiness, felt herself lifted to a higher potentiality of pleasure, inducted into a new and finer means of enjoyment.

This sense of happiness shone in her face. Not only the features, — the intelligent eye, the smiling mouth, — but even her piled-up hair, her neck, her shoulders, her arms, gave this winning effect of

one made to be happy and to give happiness. She was very good to look at. It was not necessary for her to say much. If Carlton turned to stout and dark Mrs. Knight, — a young woman, with a shade of mustache over her short upper lip, who seemed insatiably interested in horses, — Mr. Drew, on the other side, was ready to take her up. Philip often looked across a segment of the round table at her. He sat between Miss Norman and Mrs. Hollingshead. The two ladies were talking across the broad and impervious shield of his shirt bosom.

"So now the divorce is settled, she's going on the stage," Miss Norman was saying.

"Well, it's time she appeared in a new character. The old one is pretty badly used up," commented Mrs. Hollingshead, with that mock demureness which Philip liked least of all her tricks. She turned her pretty, saucy eyes to his face, incidentally. The broad, sandy Mr. Knight, who was listening, laughed aloud. Mr. Hollingshead was devoting himself mostly to the champagne.

"Rather commonplace, though, don't you think, — going on the stage?" said Miss Norman. "Certainly, she's never shown a lack of originality before. I'm rather disappointed."

Mr. Knight laughed again. Miss Norman glanced up at Philip's unresponsive face. He saw the glance, and it confirmed his idea that she was talking in this disagreeable strain for his benefit, and that Mrs. Hollingshead was helping her on. This cool Miss Norman, with the strong pose of her head, her large nose, dark eyes, and thick

black eyebrows, seemed to wish to challenge him, to tantalize him, to fling down a bit of grossness before him; and in a subtle way the challenge and mockery were half on Eva's account, as though she wished to say: "You see, a man with a beautiful wife must n't take himself so seriously!"

"Still, the stage offers great opportunities to an ambitious woman," said Mrs. Hollingshead, in her demure way. "We see that in the newspapers every day." It happened that the whole table was listening just then.

"But is n't it very hard work?" asked Eva seriously.

Mr. Knight's loud laugh rang out harshly. Mrs. Hollingshead bent forward, her pretty eyes shining at Eva in an odd way. She took the rose from her corsage and tossed it across the table. "Carry that in your hand," she said.

Eva took the rose, laughing and coloring, quite confused, understanding that she had blundered, but not in the least knowing how. Mr. Carlton was smiling, but in an odd almost embarrassed way, and as he looked up at her, she saw in his glance a certain kindliness and good affection for her.

When they left the table, Mrs. Hollingshead led the way to the small room which she called the library. Here Philip fell to Hollingshead, the young man with gray hair and an important air, grave, empty, intemperate, platitudinous, who drank some raw whiskey and talked political economy. Once Miss Norman walked over.

"Selfish men," she said, "keeping your improv-

ing society all to yourselves." She smiled down at Philip, mocking his boredom, and, perhaps by chance, glanced across at Eva, who was laughing over another of Carlton's inexhaustible stories.

It was something after eleven o'clock when the party broke up. The highest exultation was gone. That conscious effervescence of joy was no longer in Eva's brain. But she felt a supreme content, as though the solid residuum of her happiness remained with her.

Out in the corridor she put her hand on Philip's arm and hugged it against her breast.

"Was it a good dinner, dear?" she asked. She had scarcely spoken to him the whole evening. There had been no time. So many others had claimed her attention.

"Yes; it was a tiptop dinner," said Philip wearily. "I think I should have enjoyed it, if it had n't been for the company."

Eva felt her happiness taking a chill. "Did n't you like it — really?" she asked anxiously.

Philip yawned. "I could have struggled through without it. You see, I don't know any horse stories. That awful ass Hollingshead got me in the corner and talked political economy to me between drinks. I can understand why he wants to keep his brain sopped in whiskey. It 's to avoid being bored to death with his own company."

Eva was silent until they got nearly to their own apartment. Her hand still lay on his arm, though the impulse to withdraw it was in her mind. She was very deeply hurt. That superior, bored, sar-

castic tone seemed to contemn her ; it seemed to be herself that he was scorning.

" Don't you like Mrs. Hollingshead, Philip ? " she asked at length.

" She 's a vulgar little beast," said the man calmly.

He was aware that he was acting ungenerously, especially when, in their own room, he saw his wife's dry, hurt eyes. But the sense of a large injury rankled in his mind and spoiled his temper. The whole air of the thing — cheap, indefinably familiar, and lax — offended him ; and, especially, Eva's success in it was distasteful. He saw that he had spoiled her pleasure, and the reproach of that oddly increased the sum of his resentment against the dinner, as though Mrs. Hollingshead's free-and-easy air was responsible for his ungenerousness.

" You see, you were quite wrong to think of a book of etiquette, my dear ; you should have looked up a guide to the race track," he said. He repented of it as soon as he had said it. But his resentment would have its way for the moment. Mrs. Hollingshead's affair pleased him so little. It was not only that it seemed to him cheap and vulgar, — somewhere there leered a small, covert, sinister, nameless imp, who by a mere motion of the eyelids, a mere swift deflection of the eye, directed a blighting glance toward Eva.

He saw that he had gone too far. She whirled around to face him. There was a flash in her blue eyes. " It would have been all right, if Miss Worthington had been there ! " she said.

The answer was so obvious that before he knew it he said: "You see, she would n't have been there."

For a moment she faced him, biting her lip, a line down the middle of her forehead, speechless. He knew that he had hurt her deeply, and a saving sense of the sordidness of the thing came to him. She should not have brought in Miss Worthington, — but to be quarreling like a bricklayer and his wife!

"Let 's not, Eva," he said in a low voice. "Forgive me. I 'm glad you enjoyed it."

Eva's battle-flag dropped; but the deep hurt remained. "You ought n't to have done this, Phil!" she cried. Her voice shook a little, and tears came to her eyes. "You might have let me have my one dinner party."

"Yes, yes; forgive me," he said quickly. There was an instant when he wished he could tell her why he did n't like the Hollingsheads, but he supposed, somewhat resentfully, that it was a question of taste, and that he would only get into fresh trouble.

When Eva laid off her new gown, the finery seemed a bit sad, — tarnished and bedraggled some way. There was none of the irresponsible joy in its prettiness which she had felt when she put it on.

V

The snowstorm silently enfolded the big, smoky town, softening the jangle of its streets, veiling its architectural raggedness, mellowing its grimy vistas. The small, hard flakes sifted steadily down without sound or haste. At half past four it was quite dark. The long line of Michigan Avenue sparkled with lights. The windows made golden squares, as though, at the saving touch of this snow, the grimy city's heart warmed and glowed out. If one were vigorous, well clad, and going to a snug home, this snow was charming. The cold air made the motion of one's limbs, the flow of one's blood, delightful. Innumerable glimpses of warm, lighted interiors enticed the mind with hints of cosy security.

The tall lad in brass buttons opened the Twenty-Sixth Place door for Eva and stood aside for her to enter. In her fur cap and cape with its broad upturned collar, and narrow skirt fitting tight over the hip, she made the lad think of a sort of glorified grenadier. Her eyes sparkled. The keen air had brushed her cheeks to a deep, cold pink.

"It 's pretty cold, Henry," she said, and smiled brilliantly at the lad, merely from the pleasure she felt in her vigorous limbs and the strong, fresh flow of her blood. She stooped and shook her skirts, to which particles of snow clung. The boy

felt the cold of her garments, of her person itself, like a kind of atmosphere exhaling from her. The nearness of her woman's beauty allured and half terrified him, as though he must helplessly beg for it, and yet feared it.

Eva passed on to the elevators. The mere brisk flow of her blood evoked a social desire. She stopped at Mrs. Hollingshead's apartment, because one must have somebody to talk to and be sociable with.

Mrs. Hollingshead was eating chocolate creams out of a huge wooden Easter egg that was tied with blue ribbons. Although it was late in the afternoon, she was still in a morning gown of yellow silk, with a great deal of lace. She had arisen after noon, and her eyes still looked heavy. This sleepy look, and the loose silk gown upon the pretty figure, gave Eva an uncertain impression, as of something luxurious, oriental, not quite pleasant.

Nevertheless, Eva soon found herself laughing and expostulating, as one does with people whose weakness makes one fonder of them.

Little Theodore leaned against his mother's knees, whimpering, begging for more candy, and reaching with his sticky hands. Mrs. Hollingshead held the wooden egg high over her head, the loose sleeve falling away and showing her smooth, pretty arm. In the other hand there was a piece of candy, and with the elbow of that arm she was fending off the child's attack. Her mouth was full, and she was making an odd warning sound through her lips,

trying to save both the candy and the gown from the little eager, sticky fingers.

"No! no! Go away!" she managed to say. "You shan't have any more. The rest is all bad candy! It will make you sick. It 's got medicine in it! Theodore! I 'll box your ears! Go over to aunt Eva. She 's got some nice candy for you."

"She ain't either," Theodore declared. He looked doubtfully around at Eva, tears in his eyes. Mrs. Hollingshead took advantage of the diversion to pop the piece of candy into her mouth.

"She ain't," Theodore repeated, turning back. "There! you 're eating more!" he cried. His wails recommenced.

"That 's just my tongue," said Mrs. Hollingshead thickly, her cheek bulging. "See, I 'm going to put the candy away. It 's all gone now any way. Go to aunt Eva."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Eva declared; but even as she said it, she laughed. The mother's fibs and greediness for the candy seemed so childish that her reproach was only half sincere.

Theodore retreated, whimpering, to her knees, and looked over at his mother accusingly with tearful eyes.

"Come on," said Eva; "I 've got something for you upstairs. We 'll go up there and find it."

"There 's a dear," said Mrs. Hollingshead coolly. "Take him with you, and keep him as long as you can. Nellie always has her afternoons out on my rattiest days."

"Send him down when you 're tired of him," Mrs. Hollingshead called cheerfully, as Eva and Theodore went out; and she reached for another chocolate cream.

It was easy enough for Eva to condemn Mrs. Hollingshead; but some way the condemnation did not seem to count. It was as though she pleaded guilty to everything beforehand, with her pretty, saucy smile and her childishly open recklessness. Her utter selfishness was so engaging that Eva thought it really not selfishness at bottom, but only a sort of gay carelessness. To be sure, Eva had her grave moments. For example, she could never make the cigarettes seem quite right, and she could not help a certain hard soberness respecting Mrs. Hollingshead's easy familiarity with various things to drink. More than all, there was sometimes a posture, a speech, which hurt her all through. She supposed honestly that she was rather rustic in her views of propriety. Whatever Mrs. Hollingshead did must be right enough in a sort, because it had the seal, the sign manual, of society. More than all, Mrs. Hollingshead was so friendly to her, — the road, indeed, whereby she entered that gay, bright life which she called "society."

Upstairs, she sat on the floor with Theodore, showing him the pictures in a big book. She often had the child with her for hours, sometimes by arrangement with the mother, but quite as often because Nellie, the maid, had discovered how nicely Eva's inclinations to have Theodore fitted with her

own inclinations to get rid of him. Now and then the child got away and came up there of his own accord. If he was missing, Nellie came up to Mrs. Marvin's first to find him.

They discussed the pictures, — the drolly grave child, now quite happy with his friend, aunt Eva, and the woman, who loved this mite in a way that only a woman can love a little child.

"Will I be that big some day?" he asked, laying his finger on a picture.

"Oh, yes; bigger 'n that, maybe."

"I don't believe I grow very much," said Theodore gravely, his dark, serious eyes looking into Eva's face. "I measured by a chair once, and I don't believe I growed since then."

Eva, bubbling with laughter, caught him tight in her arms. "The way to make boys grow," she said, crushing him against her breast, "is just to hug the life out of them, and kiss them all to pieces." She kissed his cheek and neck with a kind of insatiable hunger, laughing all the time, while Theodore twisted in her strong arms, pushing his hands against her breast to free himself, gurgling with smothered laughter.

Thus Philip found them when he strode in, his mind in a painful tumult of disgust, wrath, wounded pride, and a certain dread.

It had come to a crisis with him. He had gone on liking gay little Mrs. Hollingshead and her personal familiars less and less. Of late it had been something more than a matter of taste. It had been coming to him in various ways that this

gay little woman was walking on the brink. As for Billy Carlton, everybody knew what that young man was. The sinister little imp had been growing larger of late, and grinning at Philip in a more personal way. There was no question of a vulgar jealousy. He was not capable of doubting Eva's honesty. All the same, the ineradicable blight of scorn was falling all about Mrs. Hollingshead. The withering finger which pointed at her could scarcely avoid Eva. Philip's old elemental man's pride writhed under it.

The climax had come this afternoon. A journalist had told the story to a group of other men, — an adventure at a road house, — possibly only a reckless indiscretion. Carlton was the man. The woman's name was not mentioned.

"What can a woman be thinking of, to do a thing of that sort?" said one of the men, in a tone of disgust.

"What can her husband be thinking of?" said another. "He must be an awful ass."

"Well, Hollingshead always was an ass," said the man who had told the story. He laughed unpleasantly. Thus suddenly the guilty woman was brought in.

It was one of those recitals, one of those episodes, which suddenly strip a woman of her womanhood, which seem to cast her naked into the road before men like a bone flung down before a pack of dogs. The more sensitive of the listeners looked away, secretly disgusted with the teller of the story and with themselves, subtly pierced by a sense of the

degradation of which life is capable. Philip, who was unknown to the journalist, hurried off.

The presence of the child made it impossible to say anything to Eva then. They went up to dinner, and Theodore sat between them. Philip did not look at his wife. Her very beauty deepened his painful sense of that blighting shadow which, to his inner sense, rested so near her. The mere fact of having to warn his wife against a compromising association was abominably painful. It was a great relief to him that Miss Worthington came in. Here was something fine and serene, far removed from the base touch of this painful business. He addressed himself to her, partly for the comfort of talking to her, partly in order to keep from looking at Eva. Once or twice he fancied a subtle divination, a fine air of sympathy, on the other woman's part. Eva kept herself occupied with Theodore.

As they finished their dinner, the maid came up and got the child. They walked back to their apartment without speaking a word. Inside, Eva turned on the light and faced him at once.

"Now, Philip, what is it?" she asked. Her face was composed, her voice calm; but there was no mistaking her air, nor the steady, challenging look from her blue eyes. She proposed at last to face the thing squarely and have it out.

Her abrupt question, her air of readiness, startled Philip, and in the mere confusion he asked stupidly: "What 's what?"

Instantly he execrated himself for that stupidity

and cowardice. He perceived that instead of meeting the thing firmly, he had dodged and bungled it at the very beginning, and this perception mysteriously excited his temper.

She smiled slightly at his stupid question, — a dry smile.

"You came home with something on your mind," she said quietly.

"Yes, I did," he declared. "I don't like your friends!" He flung it out wrathfully. That was not at all the way he had purposed putting it. In some inscrutable manner the thing had got out of his hands. He felt his temper rising, but that was only part of the unmanageableness of the affair.

"I don't believe they like you very well, either, Phil, — the way you treat them," she said, with a calmness which seemed to him half contemptuous.

"I treat them better than they deserve!" he retorted.

He saw her face harden. Her eye challenged his.

"Does Miss Worthington think so?" she asked, in an even voice.

"She has nothing to do with it! Why do you bring her in?" he demanded angrily. The mere difficulty of keeping the thing in hand exasperated him. He was stupidly angry because he could not keep cool. He wished to make her hold her tongue and listen to him; to forbid her to get angry over his anger. He felt the clash of their tempers, and that excited him like a physical contest.

"It seems to me she has a lot to do with it."

Eva was speaking faster now. "She seems to have a lot to do with everything that concerns us. I guess she's pretty well in it already, when you sit all through dinner and tell her things about me that you won't tell me. Oh, I know!" she cut in, forestalling his protest. "You did n't say anything in words, but you kept telling her, all the same! Did n't you glower around at me every now and then as though you were at a funeral, without ever saying a word to me, and did n't you go back to her for sympathy? When people looked around because I laughed at Theodore, did n't you look ashamed, and did n't she pat you on the back and tell you never to mind having a fool of a wife?"

Philip strove to speak; to declare the injustice of her accusation. He felt himself helplessly impassioned, as though he were physically struggling against the copious stream of her angry will, which was sweeping him along and carrying him further and further from the point which he wished to make.

"That woman is sticking her nose in here all the time!" Eva declared, as with a kind of exaggerated flourish to her speech.

"Miss Worthington is at least a respectable woman!" Philip cried hotly. It was not at all what he wished to say. Even as he said it, he was filled anew with anger because the affair had got so completely out of his own hands. He wished to command her to stop talking and listen to him.

"Is that why you prefer her society to your wife's?" she demanded. "You 've been holding

something against me for three months, — ever since that dinner at the Hollingsheads'. You go around accusing me of it. What is it? You dislike Mrs. Hollingshead because she does n't talk of the things that interest you, and because Miss Worthington don't like her. You think Miss Worthington is smart, — and I guess she is, — and you want her approval. She don't approve of Mrs. Hollingshead, so you don't want me to have anything to do with Mrs. Hollingshead. Did you ever stop to think that Miss Worthington don't approve of me, either? She and her friends don't care a rap for me. What am I to do? Never to have any friends of my own? I told you I was n't as smart as you, nor as well educated, and I expect you 'll have friends who won't care for me, and mine won't be intellectual, because if they were they would n't care for me. I 've never objected to your friends, nor to all the time you spend with them away from me. Do you think you can pick out my friends for me as well as yours for you? You say Mrs. Hollingshead is vulgar. You never stop to think that that 's probably why she likes your wife. She and Mrs. Knight and Mr. Carlton, and some others that you don't like, have been good friends to me. They don't ask me to sit off in the corner and suck my thumb while they air their cleverness. They don't find me stupid and tiresome because I can't talk literature and painting. What do you expect to make of me? "

Philip could only stare at her. His anger left him as suddenly and inexplicably as it had come.

In that clash and struggle of their wills her stronger temper had overborne him. He felt himself helplessly swept away in the copious stream of her wrath. He had ceased to struggle. Of what use was it to contend with her? They had been carried miles away from what he had to say about Mrs. Hollingshead. It seemed to him that if he tried to get back to that, he would only provoke another quarrel, in which again her stronger temper would bear him down and sweep him away. Now he had no wish to go back to Mrs. Hollingshead. The evaporation of his anger left a complete passivity. He stared at her, seeing her for a moment in a new way, as a being who was not manageable by him, who was beyond the reach and control of his will. Staring at her, she seemed strange. That soft line of her throat, the little curve of her red lips, the two brown eyebrows, the dear little cleft in her full chin, — to what stranger did these features, so oddly unfamiliar, belong? It came to him in a large, dim way that she was of that vast alien, universal, intractable body of things which he could never manage, which forever eluded his hands. Again he felt that defeat, that inertia, in his will. He folded back within himself.

Eva felt the opposition of his will withdrawn. At once, as by removal of the friction, her own temper began to cool.

"Would it be fair to ask me to never have any friends of my own?" she asked, quietly now — almost coaxingly.

"No, that would n't be fair," he answered dully.

She felt him withdrawn from her, strangely out of her reach. "You know it ain't," she said teasingly. She looked at him with a little tentative smile. Now that the quarrel was over, she wished to make up. Because she had quarreled, she wished more than ever to be fully reconciled.

"You know I 'm a terror at jawing, Phil, when I 'm set off," she coaxed, with her slight smile. "Don't set me off."

"God forbid!" said Philip, with a sudden fervor. And she saw at once that the ejaculation really expressed his mind; she saw in his eyes a sort of terror of provoking her strong temper. He seemed withdrawn from her, folded up within himself. The sense of his helplessness made him the more helpless. A feeling of the unmanageable contrariness of things confused and oppressed his mind. He sat perfectly still, hoping she would say no more. When she turned away, the smile was dead in her eyes, her readiness to love, rebuffed, turning sadly back to her heart.

VI

It was an odd, brilliant day in March, after the snowstorm. With the rare chance of sleighing, the avenues were alive with sledded turnouts. Burroughs's lodging — a second story front in a modest residence on East Avenue — overlooked a roadway favored by the sleighs. The painter was propped up in bed. He paused now and then in the talk, listening to the gay sound of the bells passing below and smiling over it.

"After all," he said, "play is a great thing. The world is never so lovely as when it is simply playing. Could you two manage to roll the bed a little and jingle a bell over me?"

His appearance was alarming, and Philip saw now and then that he suffered; but he talked as cheerfully as ever. When they rose to go, the painter held Miss Worthington's hand a moment.

"Remember," she said, in a half futile attempt to keep up her cheer, "I count on your getting up before the snow goes, so that I may take you sleighing."

"But, my dear, I 've been sleighing all day," he replied quickly, — "all day!" He looked at them with his homely smile. "All the same, I 'm glad you and Marvin came to bring me fresh horses."

They went down in silence, but in the hall

below, as Philip laid his hand on the door-knob, Miss Worthington whispered anxiously, "Did you think he looked bad?"

"Yes," said Philip gravely, in a low tone; "I 'm afraid he 's very sick." He paused a moment while Miss Worthington fastened her jacket. "But, some way," he added, "one hardly thinks of that."

"No!" she exclaimed, "one has to make one's self think of it, because it seems so unimportant to him."

Philip opened the door. The strong sunlight flooded in, and he saw the glow in her upturned face. "He seems so far above it! One can imagine him loving — even Death!" Pausing on the threshold and looking at him, she spoke with a kind of impassioned courage; before which — he could not say just why — his eyes fell.

"Yes, it 's supremely beautiful," he said gravely. He wished to say more. An almost solemn lift and glow was in his mind. That high, dreamed state of serenity, of complete beauty, seemed almost upon him. He felt himself and the woman moved together by the same deep and sexless feeling.

In the moment's instinctive pause, mentally leaning toward one another, they looked out at the dazzling street. Two sleighs were passing each other noisily over the glistening snow. Across the way, the heavy and tasteless red granite porches of a row of showy residences stared at them under cappings of snow.

Miss Worthington gathered her skirts. "How ineffably vulgar some things are!" she murmured absently.

The long blare of a trumpet assailed their ears. A coach, mounted on runners and drawn by four horses, came swinging into the avenue with a wide, slewing motion which brought out a chorus of exclamations in women's voices. It took the driver a minute to gather up his animals from the reckless turn and to get them under way. In the minute Philip saw Carlton on the high front seat, driving, pulling at the lines, and laughing at the women's reproaches. Beside him sat little Mrs. Hollingshead, clutching his arm with both hands, and calling out something that made him laugh more. Eva sat at the outside of the next seat, clinging to the seat, laughing. This much Philip saw, with a confusion of other figures. In a strange flash he caught his wife's eye, then the coach went swiftly by.

Philip's mind came tumbling down from its height. The very extent and swiftness of the descent made a gasping sense of pain, as though he had fallen bodily. From that high, dreamed state of serenity and beauty to this! Everything crowded together in his brain, around that vision of Eva among her dubious companions, with that shadow of scorn darkening around her. Most of all there was that crushing sense of the unmanageable contrariness of things. For an instant he felt that he could rush after the coach and carry Eva away by the strength of his arms. Then he fell back upon

himself, a mere suffering spectator, before whom the procession passed in its immutable indifference.

Clutching the seat as the sleigh swung around the corner, laughing, the sparkle of the bright day in her blood, taking in the crisp air like champagne, full of the brilliant sunshine, elated by the swift motion of the vehicle, by the fine, vigorous action of the horses, whose sleek, rounded flanks and strong limbs she loved, delighted with the gay, stylish-looking company, happy as a schoolboy on a lark, Eva looked up and saw Philip standing with Miss Worthington on the strange doorstep. A nameless shock passed through her nerves, — a flash of that other man whom she had called her husband, and whom she had encountered emerging from a strange door with a woman. This of course was entirely different, — that flash came on the heels of the other. Philip was a gentleman; Miss Worthington a lady. She never had a doubt as to the character of the mutual attraction. But it left her out as completely as that other attraction. The odd, superficial coincidence, the spontaneous, inexplicable association of the one encounter with the other, profoundly shocked her mind. In a deep plunge she seemed to see him far removed from her; and she felt all about her the void of an immense loneliness, — saw herself vastly isolated. Eva of Hopeville and Cobb's Café, — where were those upon whom she could lay her hands, whom she could call close beside her?

The sleigh glided swiftly on over the shining snow. The horses gladly plied their graceful

strength. Gay talk and laughter went on in gales. Mr. Knight at the back was busy with the bugle. They glided down the boulevard, by imposing houses, in a stream of other vehicles where theirs attracted most attention. Turning into the park, Mrs. Hollingshead insisted upon driving again. She raced with another sleigh, and nearly tipped them over, — near enough to send a shock through their nerves. By degrees the wine of the sun and keen air got back in Eva's blood. She recalled that Burroughs lived somewhere down that way, and that he was ill. No doubt they had been to see him. The explanation comforted her. From her high seat she could look over the wide, snow-covered expanse of the park and the endless icy breadth of the lake beyond, all glittering in the sun. The uncommon view and the swift, gliding, noiseless motion made a kind of theatrical illusion, as though the world had been set in a brand-new scene for a gay play in which she was taking a leading part. She was aware that her costume was stylish and becoming. The handsomely dressed, well-known people about her, the rig itself with its effect of extravagance, made her feel important and distinguished. The gayety came back to her. She had a secret sense of success, of having come out at the top. When the improvised sleigh swung up at the curb beside the hotel, and she climbed down, two of the men hastened to assist her. There was a gay volley of exclamations. The tall lad stood outside, bare-headed, waiting to open the door for her. Her gay heart made it

something triumphal, a little ceremonial of her success, as though she had been acknowledged and were landing to come into her kingdom. Standing on the flagging for a moment, gayly tossing back good-bys while the coach waited, she had a secret, absurd, loving sense of herself, — a sense perhaps a little drunken with the sunshine and the crisp air.

This sense, the happiness blent with a secret feeling of success and triumph, was so insistent that it would not let her go indoors when the sleigh drove away. She was somewhat cramped from long sitting. Her happiness and the spring-like sap that stirred in her firm, vigorous limbs demanded motion, exercise, the open air. If she thought of Philip, — why, it was simply impossible in so splendid a world that everything would not come out right and fine in the end.

She turned west, scarcely heeding where she was going, and walked on rapidly, for the pleasure of the vigorous motion. Her tall, fine figure got every advantage from the snug little fawn-colored jacket. Her small, turban-like hat took nothing from the strong, graceful poise of her head. She held up her chin. In her eyes, in the slight curve at the corner of her mouth, there was good humor, as though she were almost ready to smile. In the motion of the erect body one could feel the free, vigorous step.

Near the western end of the hotel an arched roadway pierced the big pile, leading to the kitchen. A small door opening from this roadway gave into

the hotel bar-room, as a modest sign announced. Passing the mouth of this arched way, Eva was aware of a man — a mere moving figure at the edge of her field of vision — stepping into the roadway from the bar-room door. She scarcely saw his features at all, yet an indefinable something sent a swift prickle of apprehension through her veins; and all at once she knew that the man was stepping hurriedly to her side.

"Eva! Eva!" called a voice in her ear. In the mere galvanic leap of her nerves she took a couple of long steps.

"Eva!" said the voice again, and the man laid a detaining hand on her arm.

At the touch she whirled around, jerking her arm away, facing him furiously.

"Let me alone!" she panted. "If you dare touch me, I'll strike you here in the street!"

She looked perfectly capable of it. Her brows were contracted in a scowl; her eyes blazed. When she confronted Soden, the familiarity of his lineaments came back to her angry eyes as by a kind of mechanical process, while her heart poured out revolt, defiance, repudiation. Even in that moment of blind passion, it seemed to her monstrous that this man should come back in her day of triumph.

The man was, perhaps, thirty one or two, but he looked rather older. His face was still handsome. He had large, soft brown eyes, a straight, nicely modeled nose. Under his short brown mustache the red lips, curved like a cupid's bow, looked boyish. The face was coarsely red now, and over the

cheek-bones there was a lining of little red marks like the fibre in a bank-note. His clothes were presentable, but they just escaped being shabby. It was Emory Soden, — only he had lived three years more. That was the woman's judgment.

To the man she seemed younger, fairer, more blooming, more desirable, than the image which had stuck in his memory. The style of her costume was not lost upon him.

"W'y, can't I speak to you, Eva?" the man asked quietly.

"No! You 've got nothing to say to me!" she declared passionately. "We 've got nothing to do with each other! I won't talk to you!" She started forward rapidly, both with the idea of getting away from him and of getting him away from the hotel.

"Anyhow, I 'd like to know how you was getting along." Soden, still in his humble attitude, was keeping pace with her.

"Much you cared!" she flung back scornfully.

They had reached Wabash Avenue. A cable train was pulling up to the corner. She halted, whirling to face him so abruptly that they nearly collided. In that moment the glance of each struck into the eye of the other with a strange intimacy, an intimacy deeper and closer than any speech or physical contact could have brought. In this intimacy the speaking eye of each said something to the heart of the other deeper and closer than words could have gone, as though for an instant the spirit of each rushed up and confronted the spirit of the

other. In the eye of the woman, the man saw repudiation, and that anger which is part of the rage of panic. In the man's eye, the woman saw only an anguished, baffled, dog-like appeal.

"I'm going to take this car. You must n't follow me. Do you understand?" She spoke more quietly, but there was still the flash in her eye. He stood still, watching her run out, climb on the car, and disappear.

In the car Eva stared stonily through the opposite window. It seemed incredible that this man should come back to torment her. He had abused her enough.

The mere blind tumult in her mind was wrath and panic. Then by little and little she began to see how simple it was, after all. And with that it came to her that the law was all on Soden's side. No doubt he could send a policeman after her, if she was really his wife, undivorced. He could bring her into court. To her confused imagination, the law was only an amplification of the tables handed down to Sinai in cloud and lightning. It was of the same dreadful inexorableness; an investment of the same omnipotent moral command which she felt at the bottom of her heart that she had violated. She could tell herself that she was not really a criminal; she had only loved and given. But there was the law, — conceived by her simple, rustic, moral traditions, founded upon Puritanism. It prefigured itself to her as a policeman, a court, a brand of scandal, an ignominious punishment, a voice calling, "Eva Crawford, come into court.

Are you living in adultery?" Her heart throbbed and ached with fear, in the confused rebellion of her will against the presentiment of punishment. She kept trying to tell herself that she would elude Soden; she would throw him off the track; in a little while he would wander away. That did not suffice. The judgment kept impending. When she got off the car up town to take a different car south, this doubling on her track seemed almost useless. The sense that she could not elude what was pursuing her persisted in her mind. She had a nameless fear of the blue-coated policemen on the corners. Soden might be anywhere in this throng of men. But she walked on blindly, staring straight ahead, already feeling it useless to dodge.

In her apartment, with the door shut, the familiar things of the room comforted her. They seemed to tell her that she was kind and good. They seemed ready to help her beg off from the judgment.

They evoked a feeling of the possibility of human help and comfort, a little warming her cold mind. She walked about the room, touching some of the things, — a sofa pillow, a chair, the fire screen. On the centre table lay a book, with a sheet of paper between the leaves. She picked it up, — a volume in French, with Miss Worthington's name in the front, some marginal notations in her hand, and some in Philip's.

She took again that deep plunge; she seemed to feel all about her the void of an immense loneliness. Where were those whom she could call on

to help? Mrs. Hollingshead? The notion brought something like a slight and bitter smile to her mind. Philip? Yes, Philip, of course —

Suddenly, the things which she thought of as her social affairs, on which she had plumed herself, turned indescribably foolish and futile, — like useless toys in her hands in this trouble. She had persisted in them because they amused her, as a relief to her loneliness, partly out of pride because Philip persisted with Miss Worthington and Burroughs. Now, she and Philip were apart. He had never before seemed so far away. She seemed to perceive him not understanding this trouble, a little vexed at being bothered with it, thinking it vulgar. She saw herself the village drayman's daughter, the clerk in Tom Sears's store, at the publishing house, in Cobb's Café. Then she had done no wrong. Then she had not been afraid. What had she done that she was afraid to stand alone now?

Once or twice she wondered that she had not foreseen this. In the brief time when she and Philip were settling their mode of life, it is true, something like this had been more or less in her mind; but far-off, unreal. Then her sacrifice, her surrender, the bestowal of herself upon her lover, had been the great thing, exalting everything else. After they came to this hotel, so much had happened, she had lived so fast, everything had been so secure, so taken-for-granted, — and there had been her success.

Her nerves shook slightly and she steadied her-

self when she heard Philip's hand on the door. For a moment her heart suffocated her, and she again felt about her the cold void of an immense isolation. The sight of Philip's familiar figure overwhelmed her with hunger for his comfort, — to throw herself into his arms, to feel his love around her; but as he stood before her, looking up with his air of abstraction, the moment when she could possibly have done that went swiftly by. Such things had not been very common between them of late. She felt timid and uncertain before him.

"I saw Emory Soden to-day — on the street," she said, speaking with a kind of awkwardness. "He tried to speak to me — to follow me."

Philip looked at her in surprise. The moment he saw her face, the thought which flashed into his mind was: "Did she meet Soden before she went sleighing? Had she seen him when she was perched up there beside Carlton and Mrs. Hollingshead, laughing? — the besmirched Mrs. Hollingshead?"

His busy under-consciousness recognized a cruelty, an insult in this thought, and his will struggled against it. But that hateful picture of her in the sleigh had been in his mind all the afternoon; and the cruelty, the insult, seemed able to dodge his will and get in despite him. Ah, but this was disagreeable! That fellow of the saloons, of the gutter, who had once possessed her!

Nevertheless, he perceived her agitation, and attempted to do justice to it. He sat down, with

an air of grave and sympathetic deliberation, and stroked his beard.

"What did he want?" he asked, with deliberate air, as though this was a matter to be considered in the most judicial manner; and all the time he knew in his busy under-consciousness that this air was only a thin little mask to hide his confusion and his quailing before the crisis.

"Why, I don't know, Philip," said Eva. "I would n't talk to him. He tried to follow me, but I left him." It was the woman offering her loyalty to the man; vaguely rebuffed by his judicial air, when she wanted only his whole love; dimly feeling herself on trial before him because of this other man.

Philip, too, felt the need of a touch of love. He perceived her trouble. But what could he do with Soden, who presumably was legally her husband? He felt himself in a thoroughly false position. Some way so much had got between them,— a whole difficult mass of things, which Soden's intrusion now suddenly solidified. Soden's appearance made the difficulty go back even to the terms of their union. Philip perceived this for an instant, and the perception increased his dread. It seemed that one could not touch this difficulty at any point without grappling with the whole mass. Instinctively, he shrank from that heavy task. Then, against his will, that hateful picture of her in the sleigh persisted in his mind. The blighting shadow hung near her, and his male pride writhed under it. Again, he subtly felt her waiting to see

what he would do. They were in such a position that nothing flowed spontaneously between them. There was an acute self-consciousness in it all.

"Oh, well, he won't trouble you," he declared boldly, comforting himself a little with the boldness of the declaration. "In a day or two he 'll be away again. I would n't bother about him. He won't make any trouble." Quite as though he had settled it, and anxious to escape, he got up, turning to the little hall which led to the bathroom. Even as he saw himself running away from Eva's trouble, not helping her in it, and as that wounded his heart and hurt his conscience, he felt a strange sort of anger against the hurt, which made him say to himself doggedly: "She has been too headstrong about the Hollingsheads." Nevertheless, he paused at the hall door.

"If he shows signs of giving you any trouble, you know, you can go away for a while — take a trip — go to Nebraska, if you like."

He felt that, too, to be inadequate and uselessly stupid. His lack of generosity, his failure to respond to his wife's trouble, hurt his conscience, and he charged the hurt up to Eva, because her stubbornness drove him into it. He told himself that the easiest way, the way that caused least friction, was the best.

In the other room, Eva was looking at the door through which he had disappeared. There was a dry ache and constriction in her throat. For the moment she was beyond anger or resentment. She felt whipped and humbled. For a moment it

seemed to her that she must run after him and tell him again. Above all, she was struggling instinctively to keep from breaking down, from giving way to tears in her desolation. She brushed the water from her eyes, and twisted her fingers together. The simple habit of her courage helped her. By degrees she regained control of herself and became calmer. But how alone she stood! Again she felt that void about her. The recurrence of that deep sense of loneliness, of the plunge which had come when she saw Philip and Miss Worthington on the porch, when she was running away from Soden, when Philip entered the room, and now, touched her mind with a certain indefinite but solemn suggestion, like the stroke of a warning bell.

VII

THE necessary machinery of existence readjusted itself and turned on. The husband and wife were aware of an alienation, a distance between them. The days and nights were to be got through just the same. Soden did not reappear. There was no quarrel.

Philip had a bad conscience. It seemed to him rough on Eva to let her have her trouble about Soden so much to herself; but that was only part of the stubborn contrariness of things. For now a letter had come from Elmira, saying that she and Ezra were to be sent to Detroit as lay delegates to a church convention in midsummer, and they might come on to Chicago. So amid his other difficulties that far-off, dim contingency of his family suddenly resolved itself into a near, an ominous snare.

Naturally, he had not told his family of his marriage. He knew in the bottom of his heart that the Dearborn Avenue lodging-house arrangement was not an affair that he could very well present to his mother. With her pride and ambition, that would be the last straw; it would definitely close the door of the prison. There had been no need of presenting it to her. His mother was very far off in the days when that arrangement was made.

The world had then consisted of himself and Eva alone. He saw clearly enough that other people had got into it since, and were more or less spoiling it. It seemed to be constructed for only two. Perhaps, after all, that was the difference which the little mummery of the license and the clergyman made. This thought occurred to him, but he put it stubbornly aside. In the first place, there was Soden in the way, — more in the way than ever just now. But aside from Soden, it seemed to him that to go back now in the matter of the mummery would be to stultify his good faith in the beginning, to accuse himself, to plead guilty of having taken her, in a way, selfishly, illicitly, — and precisely because, at the bottom of his heart, he felt guilty, it seemed to him that his only security lay in not confessing it. He stuck to this with all the stubbornness of a lax will. He would not say that he had done carelessly, selfishly, dishonorably by her in the first place.

It was more complicated to go back than to go forward. He told himself that to stick to their position was the simplest matter of good faith to themselves, to each other, and to the people among whom they had taken their place as man and wife. But going forward became more complex the moment his family threatened to come into the affair. There was that deep, strange fear of his mother, — the fear of hurting her more, of completing her tragedy, of becoming the instrument for working out upon her the ultimate dreadful fullness of the family curse of inertia and barrenness. It seemed

to him that on the day when she scorned him and renounced hope of him, something terrible would happen, — like the accomplishment, the irrevocable fixing of a destiny. To his troubled imagination there were two bodies of things, — on the one hand, Eva; on the other his mother, his family, whatever pride of place and power of mind he had, — between which he was helplessly ground. He found some comfort in Burroughs and his friends, and he helplessly sought all the comfort he could find.

Ten days passed. Going up to dinner, they came to the head of the stairs as Mr. and Mrs. Hollingshead were stepping out of an elevator.

"Hello, there, Eva! where you been lately? I want to see you," the gay little woman called.

The sound of that gay and friendly voice warmed Eva's heart. Here, at least, was some one who liked her, who could cheer her. She turned to the little matron with an odd outflow of affection.

"It's lodge business," said Mrs. Hollingshead to the two men, with her bright, impudent smile, and drew Eva aside so that they were directly in front of the second elevator as it came up to the landing.

Out of the second elevator stepped Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Bartlett, Mrs. Everett, the two Misses Everett, Miss Worthington, and her mother. Mrs. Bertram Bartlett, as was fit, came first. It was more specifically to her, therefore, that the two chatting women, who had suspended their confidences for the moment, directed their polite, social smiles. Mrs. Bartlett's gaze barely encountered

theirs, and wandered absently over their heads. She turned to Mrs. Everett.

"But charity begins at home, doesn't it?" she said calmly; and, boldly convoyed by her, the little fleet sailed by these two questionable craft without a signal.

Miss Worthington came last. Her near-sighted eyes were not certain of the larger and further of the two feminine figures, and even when she saw Philip, she was not clear as to just what had happened.

"Are you getting on any better with 'Cyrano'?" she said, in her clear, amiable tones, smiling, as she passed him.

He shot her a strange, pained glance and muttered something into his beard. She glanced around in her near-sighted way, nodded vaguely in the direction of the two outcast female figures, and went on with her mother.

Everybody else, at least, knew that judgment had fallen. Sentence had been pronounced in open court, and the judge set a sort of seal upon the decree by nodding with negligent good nature to Mr. Hollingshead, whose frightened and vacuous smile she encountered. It was like lazily extending him the sceptre with the hand which had just decapitated his wife. The unhappy lawyer, quite mechanically, in his horrified amazement, ducked his confused head. Mrs. Hollingshead gave him a steelly glance, stepped into the elevator, and said "Down," in a decided tone. Mr. Hollingshead made a galvanic start, managed to get his limbs in

motion as the cage disappeared, and hastened downstairs after his wife, still wearing his vacuous and frightened smile.

There was no appreciation of the comedy in the minds of the couple thus left alone at the head of the stairs, before the dining-room door.

Philip turned sombrely to his wife. He was sorry for her in a way; but if he despised the cruelty of the sentence, he had no doubt whatever of its essential justness. The episode seemed to him inexpressibly mean, sordid, and vulgar. He felt himself splashed with its mud. There was nothing one could do in a case of this sort except stand patiently by the culprit who had perversely blundered into the crime.

"Shall we go in?" he suggested, in a low voice.

Eva herself seemed shocked into a kind of helplessness. "You know I can't go in there," she said, in a dead calm, — "to sit at the same table with that woman."

"Oh, she did n't see you," Philip explained kindly. "She 's near-sighted, you know."

Eva only threw him a glance.

"Of course we will sit at another table," he added, and she perceived that the suggestion cost him a moment's reluctance.

Eva had not seen Mrs. Hollingshead for ten days. Her zest for that little lady 's society seemed to have lapsed. Her own trouble drew her mind another way. It was partly sheer loneliness, partly a human rebellion at Mrs. Bartlett's

snub, which finally sent her downstairs, toward the end of the next afternoon.

She found little Theodore, in his jacket and cap, standing with his back to the hall door and kicking it with his small heels.

"Can't you get in, Theodore?" she asked.

"Well, Nellie would n't come along," the child explained angrily. "She just talked and talked with Truax. She 's always talking with Truax."

Eva put her hand to the door and it opened. She walked into the hall, holding Theodore's hand, and so into the sitting-room. The apartment was silent and seemed quite empty; but that would not be remarkable in Mrs. Hollingshead's establishment, where the maid seemed to take as much liberty as the mistress allowed herself. Eva and Theodore stepped through to Mrs. Hollingshead's room. Eva was fairly through the portière before she saw —

Mrs. Hollingshead, in a charming, negligent, luxurious house gown, standing by the writing-desk, one elbow leaning in saucy grace upon it; Mr. Carlton beside her, bending over her, both smiling slightly. Eva was not sure whether his hand had been on her waist. It did not matter. If it had been, that would have lent only a bare touch more to the intimate attitude.

She found herself saying stupidly: "I found Theodore trying to kick the door down, and brought him in. I thought you were out."

She supposed, afterward, that she must have looked startled; that she must have gaped. At

the time, there was only a blank amazement in her mind. The text was written so large that she could not miss it, — the indescribable intimacy of their postures; the two slightly smiling faces turned each to the other; the absorption which had prevented them from hearing Theodore's knocks.

They moved apart. Mrs. Hollingshead said, "Oh, yes," indifferently.

But what came in most vividly to Eva's amazement was Carlton's expression. He glanced at her, turning redder. He was greatly embarrassed. Her stupid eye caught his glance for one instant, and he seemed horribly ashamed.

This came back to her when she had got out of the apartment — she hardly remembered how. The mere amazement remained in her mind. Up in her own apartment, sitting by the window and staring down at the graveled roof beneath, she felt like shuddering without exactly knowing why. She had seen the world with open, intelligent eyes. Things of this sort happened. Now and then it had happened within the range of her own observation. Naturally, there were always women who were weak or dirty. But this particular thing, — in an indefinable way it came so close to her. She felt like shuddering without knowing just why.

By degrees it began to come out more clearly, as the mere amazement subsided. She scarcely took the trouble to condemn Mrs. Hollingshead, against whom she had no anger whatever. As though a curtain had fallen, that gay little woman began to

stand out before her with surprising clearness. She seemed to see the greedy little fingers reaching for sweets; the pitifully naked little soul, like a selfish, spoiled, unintelligent child, clamoring for pleasure. It was only when she thought of Theodore that her contempt for the mother grew strong.

Oddly, she did not condemn Carlton at all. He seemed a problem beyond the reach of her arithmetic. She had liked him, had grown quite fond of him, because he had always been so nice to her. She felt that he really wished to be her friend, and even after this, she still felt that he wished to be her friend. He had been embarrassed, ashamed.

That expression in his eyes kept recurring to her memory. What was it? That expression which was pained and at the same time begging; at once wounded and soliciting, — some way like the look in the eyes of a dog. She could identify the look. It had been in Soden's eyes when he begged her to stay a moment and speak to him, — that anguished, humble, pleading look. She had seen it in Philip's eyes. It was the desire of happiness; the flashing out of that haunting dream of joy which these men pursued. She saw them all some way alike, — Soden, Philip, Carlton, Mrs. Hollingshead, — all insatiably hungry for happiness, which they pursued and which eluded them.

In this hard, deep coil of thought one thing came out clearly, namely, that Mrs. Bartlett had been on solid ground when she administered that snub. Mrs. Hollingshead was the sort of woman whom

one had the right to snub. Perhaps Mrs. Hollingshead's friend, Mrs. Marvin, was outwardly that sort of woman, too. Other people had known about this. She felt the finger pointing at her. Then she remembered Philip's objections to Mrs. Hollingshead, — something about their quarrel on that subject. The thought struck her mind: Did Philip, too, know about Mrs. Hollingshead? What had he heard — that he had never told her? She felt the complete wreck of that gay, unsubstantial little world on which she had plumed herself so much. It seemed cruelly unfair that, with her good intentions, she had been suffered to go on to the wreck which, in a way, left her so bare. She, who was so friendly, seemed to have had no friends when she needed them.

Philip's presence scarcely deflected her thoughts. She kept glancing at him in the light of them. Along in the evening, without looking at him, she asked abruptly: "Why did Mrs. Bartlett snub Mrs. Hollingshead that way yesterday?"

The very quietness of the tone surprised Philip into answering: "Because Mrs. Hollingshead is n't a respectable woman. Her reputation is bad." And at once he calmly told her some of the stories. "Things of that sort won't do, — whether she is really a bad woman or not." He stopped; it struck him that he might be getting on dangerous ground.

Eva's face was still toward the window. She did not look around. After a moment she said, with a kind of solemnity: "I never knew that or

thought that about her before to-day. I never even knew she was talked about. I suppose — I 'm talked about, too, and that 's why Mrs. Bartlett snubbed me. I liked those people. They seemed to like me. Any way, they made me feel as though they did. I thought it was fine to go with them. You might have told me this." Her quiet voice ceased a moment. " You might have helped me, Philip. I 'd have helped you any way I could."

The man was well enough aware that emotion struggled with her speech. Her very quietness, sitting off there by the window, her face averted, made her seem more forlorn. He owned her hurt with a deep pang, yet something drew him on to defend himself. Their relationship was so complicated just then, especially with Elmira's letter in his desk, that to his sore conscience it turned a spear, porcupine-like, at every possible point of contact.

" But if you 'll remember, I did try to tell you these very things," he said. " I wished to tell you. You would n't listen. You pitched into me. I saw it would only make us quarrel, so what was the use ? Besides, I don't wish to pick out your friends for you, — to say that they must be such persons as I approve, — although you seemed to think I wished to do that. Of course you 're free to choose whom you like."

" But you knew and I did n't, Phil ! " she cried.

Although it was a cry for mercy, her firm will and strong temper some way sounded in it, and conveyed to the man a sense of her unmanageableness.

"Oh, well — you know now," he said stupidly, helplessly, not knowing why he said it.

At the ungracious words she stared around at him with hurt eyes. The speech seemed to judge her, to cast her out. Philip was frowning down at his newspaper, afraid that he had precipitated a scene. Eva turned again to the window. For the first time tears, which she was scarcely aware of, came into her eyes.

In a moment Philip stole a look at her back. He knew that a touch of love would make them one again. But he could do nothing. He even avoided stepping to the bookcase for a volume, lest the mere bodily motion should precipitate some painful catastrophe.

Sitting uncomfortably in his chair and pretending to read the newspaper, the whole force of the situation came home to him, — they two, man and woman, living together in the confines of this tiny room, in the most intimate relationship possible, yet alienated, out of touch, able only to wound and harass each other, like two strange beasts shut up in the same cage.

VIII

The second letter from Elmira lay in a drawer of Philip's desk at the publishing house. Sitting at the desk in his office jacket, Philip was as conscious of this letter as though it had been a bundle of bank-notes which he had stolen, or a draft which he had forged. He had written that he would come on to Detroit to see them. That seemed the only way out of the snarl, — and a poor enough way at best. He was still dimly visited at times by a fantastic notion of going off to Nebraska with Eva as they had planned, and wiring to Detroit that he was called away imperatively on business. But the notion was so plainly fantastic that he got no real comfort out of it. Evidently, the lie had to rest somewhere.

There was another letter in the drawer, a week old, dated from a cheap Clark Street hotel and signed Emory Soden. It asked simply for an interview. But here Philip felt himself on firmer ground. As to that fellow of the stews, he simply cast him out, and utterly, even wrathfully, defiantly, repudiated him. It was a sort of comfort to have something to cast out and defy.

Soden himself stood on the flagging a little above the Arnold Building, looking up at its high, slender front. He had got this far. Somewhere

up there was a man named Marvin, who was living with Eva at the Hotel Marlborough. He had taken the separation from Eva carelessly enough. She had scolded him a good deal and annoyed him about those money matters. Since the separation, he had not been empty handed in an amorous way. But old memories of her beauty lingered in his nerves, to be shocked into a higher power by the one scant sight of her. He would have had a certain fondness for her any way. He had found her living in what he thought a grand style, with a man who could not be her husband. He had treated his own marriage obligations with the utmost lightness. In spite of all, he could not get over the elemental feeling that she was his wife, bearing his name and honor. The sense of his own dishonor in her present situation pierced and lacerated his mind with its jealous tortures. The law could not help him, and even if it could, he would have had nothing to do with it. His unreasoned conception of the law was that it was a machine belonging to and operated by the rich, and successful to abuse the poor and unlucky. His few personal experiences of it made him regard it as a hurtful agency. A poor devil of a spendthrift and libertine, always looking for a dollar and needing five, he felt himself an under dog, one of those unfortunates whom the lucky may take any advantage of at will. Marvin, he supposed, was of the lucky. Thus he felt himself helpless. He had his certain fondness for Eva; and in the pain of his impotent jealousy he lost the distinction

between what was for him and what was for her. He knew that she wished to be a good woman. He worked himself to an emotional height. What could be finer than to sacrifice his pride, even his self-respect, to insure her happiness? He had not been quite sober when he sent off the letter to Marvin, but the emotional height endured. He proposed to see this lucky man, to arrange for a divorce, to have him marry Eva. He had a theatrical perception of himself, stepping heroically back into her life to insure her happiness; then unselfishly disappearing forever, like an Enoch Arden, leaving a grateful memory in her heart. He did not spoil it by reminding himself that to change her state from Marvin's mistress to that of his wife would be to insure his own peace of mind. He scarcely knew that this was his first motive. The sacrifice, the generosity, was so real that it brought water to his eyes and a lump to his throat.

He had got this far. The man was up there. He had only to go a few steps further and complete his sacrifice. His warm brown eyes looked up at the tall building. His heart was beating with painful rapidity. His boyishly red lips, curved in repose like a cupid's bow, twitched with an odd movement, — a slight stiffening and trembling. His mind was in the rush of overpowering, unreasoning emotions. He had only to go on — and see the man up there, that lucky man who could command everything, who had money and lived in perpetual luxury, who could keep Eva at his side without marrying her, while he, Soden, had failed to keep

her even when she was his wife. Suddenly, it seemed to him that this man would laugh at him. Why had he not answered the letter? He did n't want to marry Eva. She did n't want to be married. They had their luxury, in which they lived, scornful of him. My God! What an unlucky beggar he was! The whole world rolled over him again and again.

He turned and walked rapidly up the street, scarcely knowing where he was going, his mind a turmoil of pain. He knew he had failed to carry out his purpose, but he could hardly consider that. Their luxury, high above his reach, made a red, a bloody color in the formless turmoil of his mind. To him, drunken, spendthrift, libertine, the denial of a pleasure was a death. No one else could be so unhappy. His hungering brown eyes looked mechanically at the busy street — up at the huge gray bulk of the Auditorium, where the many curtained windows suggested snug retreats. Even the gaudy posters of a vaudeville on the high fence across the way evoked suggestions of indulgence. There was so much to enjoy! Yet bad luck pursued him like a familiar demon, kept him empty and hungry, and he was dying, dying, every day.

And at once, without his having been in the least aware whence the suggestion came or how it had conveyed itself to him, he knew perfectly where he was going and what he was to do. The rush of emotion continued. He was not aware when or how its direction had changed, or that a change had taken place. But he was turning into

Van Buren Street, under the dismal bulk of the elevated road, and walking west as rapidly as he could go, plunging over crossings and dodging by slower passengers. His heart was beating up. A swarm of little wicked voices snuggled down and whispered to it. He must pursue his happiness, which now floated and beckoned ahead.

There was some money in his pocket. It belonged to his employer. But he could not think of that now. The fact was in his mind, but it had no force against the desires which swarmed up to his brain. He was hurrying on, — hurrying lest something get in his way and stop him. Near the Board of Trade he dove into a little close, blind alley. The door of a dim, cool bar-room stood invitingly open near the mouth of the alley. He looked toward it, but passed by. The other business must come first. The door which he entered was at the upper end of the alley. It gave to a long, low, close room full of men. The three arc lamps, blazing even at midday, showed an atmosphere thick with the blue haze of tobacco smoke. There was a counter and a blackboard, on which the names of the horses and the odds were posted. Some of the names were familiar enough to Soden. He pushed nervously forward and made his bet. Then with the green ticket in his hand in place of the money, he edged into the crowd before the blackboard and waited for the race. He felt a torturing desire to smoke, as nearly all the men about him were doing. His nostrils took in even the stale fumes of the stimulating weed with a hungry

avidity. The man next him lit a cigarette from a full box, and Soden looked around at him with a kind of anguished appeal. He wished to ask the man for one, and he refrained only because it would be too painful to speak, to make the mere mental and nervous effort of articulation. It was very hot in that crowded and ill-ventilated room. The red in his cheeks faded to a dull, tallowy hue. He stared at the blackboard without really understanding what he saw there, and waited to know his fate. It was not a mere matter of thirty dollars that lay at hazard; still less was it what was left of his reputation, or his job, or the respect of his employer, or the prospect of an appearance at the Criminal Court for embezzlement. He could have faced all of those things with a steadier nerve. What lay at hazard was his spree, and as he waited to win or lose it, an iron weight crushed his brain; his nerves fell into loose tatters, — it was the kingdom of happiness with its feasts set, waiting for him.

A voice began calling the result of the race. His heart stopped painfully, then gave a great leap. He had won.

He pushed up to the counter with the crowd and exchanged his ticket for bank-notes. As soon as he could get a little aside from the press, and before he left the room, he counted off the thirty dollars which belonged to his employer and put it in an inside pocket. Then he went to the saloon, drank two cocktails in succession, and bought some cigars.

He stopped on the edge of the curb, drawing in the first grateful mouthful of smoke, the pleasant, flattering lift of the strong drink cheering his brain and swiftly soothing his nerves. Now that he had won, he was in no hurry at all. He even loitered on the curb, smiling a little, with a pleasant, leisurely self-contemplation. He was no more the beaten, the humbled, the doubting, the hungry, the lonely. He looked into the sunshine with a joyous, confident sense that for a little while he could command the world — to the only extent to which he wished to command it. His thoughts ran with a kind of exultant, exaggerated jumble, something like this: "I had to win that money; I was simply bound to win because I wanted to have a spree so bad. I was sure to win because I 'm going to have such a bully good time with the money. I 'll get drunk, of course, after a while; but not too drunk. I 'll have everything I want, but I won't overdo it. I 've got sixty dollars of my own besides the firm's thirty, which I won't touch, and after I 've had a bully time, I ought to have ten or twenty dollars left."

It pleased him to resist the temptation to take another drink. Now that the spree was in his hands, he had a crafty miserliness about it. He wished to save himself up, to enjoy it to the utmost, to dull no sense by a foolhardy gluttony. He sauntered over to Jackson Boulevard and got a cab. As he leaned against the cushions while the wheels bore him smoothly over the asphalt, the sunshine fell in and heated him pleasantly. He

glanced luxuriously out at the plodding humanity and hugged himself into his red dream. Glimmering away in his mind was a procession of luxurious vehicles, bearing him on from one pleasure to another, to silent doors which swung at a beck, admitting him as master to dim, rich interiors. His heart lay hot and still, smothering in desires which, with his miserliness, he would not even let come up bodily into thought. Ah, yes, a man could snare his happiness now and then ; could stuff himself full once in a while before he died.

Some fifty hours later, he awoke from a nap. His nerves were still depressed, and there was a bitter taste in his month. But the worst of that was over. It was growing dark. He was sitting by the one window of a high, dingy little room in the cheap and dubious Clark Street hotel to which he had come that morning as he was getting sober. He had left the hotel once — two hours or so before — to get some more bromides. He was perfectly sober now. That was his first impression as he awoke, — a sense of this clear whiteness in his brain as contrasted with the wild riots of color which had been there. It was all over. Every dollar of the money was spent, — even the money of his employer. He had no specific regret. It was only an immense, resigned sadness. Nothing lasted. His window looked over some dilapidated roofs to a cross street, where a high electric lamp burned in the smoky dusk. The lamp in the dusk vaguely attracted his sad mind. It would be so nice to slip away into the soft dark and never wake

up. He did not think particularly of his position, and his accountability to the house for the money which he had taken. That was only a part of the universal sorrow. Nothing lasted. His mind turned to Eva. How dear she had been sometimes. He did not think of her sensually. The debauch had washed every particle of color out of his mind, every red corpuscle out of his blood, leaving him passionless, pellucid. He thought only of Eva's sweetness. She came back to his sad mind with a sort of Edenic purity and tenderness, out of which he had been forever thrust. If he could only get back and lay his head in her lap, and feel her cool, firm hands. But experience had brought him a certain philosophy, and he knew that the remorse which wrung his heart as he thought of her was only part of the payment be must make for his spree, like the headache and the dreadful nervous sickness that came earlier. Yes, he must pay — and nothing lasted. His childish eyes looked out at the failing light as though he saw the world visibly dying before him. He would like to see Eva and ask her to forgive him, and tell her he was going to be good, and ask her to be good. There seemed to him a kind of infinite, penitential sadness about being good. He would cut off —

The door behind him opened swiftly. He looked around. In the dim light he saw only the figure of a woman. He stood up. Then he saw who it was.

"What did you come here for?" he demanded.

For answer there was the motion of an arm; a blinding flash of fire leapt toward him; a bloody flood surged up; he fell, with a dreadful crashing in his ears.

IX

Eva made no attempt to pick up the pieces of her insubstantial little social world. There was no open rupture between herself and Mrs. Hollingshead, only a tacit withdrawal. The lapse of those activities left her with a good deal of time on her hands, and a good many thoughts in her mind.

She had been for a walk. The trees at last were coming into full leaf, the grass-plots taking on a stronger green. Some belated robins hopped rather coldly among the branches, for a raw wind still blew off the shining lake. She could not help some stir of the tardy spring in her limbs. The chilly promise was after all a promise. Returning to the hotel, she was almost happy. Soden had disappeared. Philip would come back to her. The picture of him, loving, loyal, tender, her old dear good Phil, was always not far from the surface of her mind. It would always easily come up through the hard crust of doubt both beguiling and wounding her heart.

The tall lad opened the door for her.

"There 's an officer to see you, Mrs. Marvin," he said, in his hurried, deferential way, in a low voice.

"Officer?" Her nerveless lips framed the word.

"A policeman — in there." The boy nodded toward the little waiting-room off the marble passage.

At last — it was her policeman. She was conscious of a faintness which made things indistinct. The boy's voice said something else at a vague distance as she turned to the room. Somewhere in the dim, swooning recesses of her mind she was glad that Philip was away. He would not have the sight of this humiliation to count up among her other failings.

She entered the little room, and saw the large, blue-clad figure of a policeman, sitting with a certain ponderousness in a small purple plush chair. He arose heavily, helmet in hand, as she stood before him.

At least the man looked human. His hard red face, with its bushy mustache and blue eyes, expressed good nature. It came to her that he was reluctant; that he would kill her as gently as he could; and with that her physical faintness began to pass away. She found within herself a simple readiness.

"You want to see me?" she managed to say, quite steadily.

"Mrs. Philip Marvin?" the officer inquired politely. She saw a little notebook, which he held open against the side of his helmet with his big thumb, and at which he glanced as though it were his credentials.

"I 'm Mrs. Marvin."

"Perhaps you know a Mr. Soden,— a Mr. Emory

Soden, — used to be a friend of yours?" He put it tentatively.

"I know him."

"Well, now, he 's at the hospital — hurt. He was brought in night before last. As soon 's he got around, he wanted you sent for. It 's orders, you know, to take word to them that 's sent for." The big man was getting to a sociable ground about it. "Of course, it 's just orders to take the word. If one was to say, 'Go tell my friend, Phil Armour,' or 'Send for Mrs. Potter Palmer,' all we 'd have to do would be to take the word without asking any questions. So Mr. Soden gives your name."

Eva perceived the apology, which vaguely brought up the idea that Soden was in some disgrace. But her mind was busy with something else.

"He 's hurt, you say; how?"

"Shot — somewhere here and here." With a large forefinger he touched his breast in two places. He saw the troubled question in her eyes and added, with a certain blunt kindness, "A woman shot him." He glanced down. "A woman named Liz. She 's got away so far. It happened down on the levee." He had the effect of presenting this seamy side to her as kindly as possible.

There was a dryness in her throat as she asked, "Is — how bad is it?"

The officer glanced down at his helmet and turned it a little in his large hand. He spoke confidentially. "Well, I guess it 's pretty bad. Twice, you know, — once through the lungs. I guess the doctors call it pretty bad."

"Of course, I 'll go at once," she said quietly.

"Yes 'm. Well, if you go right away, you 'll be sure to see him." The officer seemed to cheer up at having it over with. He stepped toward the door.

"You — are you going back?" Eva asked. In spite of his explanations, she still thought herself some way under arrest, committed to his keeping.

"No 'm. I 'm going to the station. You know where it is, — the county hospital. Just tell 'em who you are and who you want to see."

"Oh, yes," said Eva, still a little confused by the idea of her liberty.

"Good-day, ma'am," said the officer gallantly, and went out.

Eva looked after him, still a little confused. But his departure made no difference in her duty. By all her traditions, there was only one thing to do, and the thought of doing anything else never came to her mind. It was the call of sickness, the intrusion of death, before which everything else must give way. It was that stark hand to which all must yield themselves with simple, unquestioning obedience. It was part of her instinctive, unformulated, rustic religion that when death came, everything else must be put aside.

She went upstairs and left a note for Philip; merely, "Emory has been shot, and I am going over to the hospital to see him. I may be late."

She took the street cars from habit. Death was beside her; its cold and solemn air all about her. Everything now came back to this simple, elemental

fact. The man who had been her husband lay dying. Some other deaths which she had seen came unbidden to her mind, — old Mrs. Sears in her white nightcap, with the bristle of white hairs in the mole on her wrinkled, sunken old chin; pretty little Sallie Downing, like a wax doll in her coffin, with a bunch of white roses on her still breast; poor Mrs. Turner, the drunken blacksmith's wife, who had been buried in a calico dress; Mrs. Jones's baby boy. It was all the same, — the cold, still forms, the set, waxen faces, so strangely unlike humanity though they wore its mask. All had passed through that mysterious and awful door. All who yet live must pass through it. It stood palpably before her. She felt herself with her strong young limbs bending her way thither, — and she had sometimes wished in her heart that Soden would die. What had made her so wicked and cruel? She had wished to retain her happiness. In that cold and solemn air which now invested her, beside those still, waxen faces, how futile the quest of happiness seemed.

From the car she saw the high, windowed wall of a medical college, flush with the dingy, crowded street. Then the county hospital came abruptly into view, immediately at hand, pavilion after pavilion, wing after wing, scattered formlessly behind the broad green lawn.

She heard a man in the car say "They have twelve hundred beds there," — a whole city of suffering.

A coatless young man, in a wooden chair tilted

against the wall, sat on guard by the door of the main building, and directed Eva to the office just inside. A number of people were going in. Others were coming out. In the office, after a short delay, she was directed to the ward in which Emory lay. A long and wide flight of stairs, rising from the gloomy hall, took her to the second story. She went on to a corridor, immensely long, walled with whitewashed brick, barn-like, but perfectly clean, and turned to the left as she had been told. Three or four people at the further end of the corridor looked half a mile away. Short passages leading to the wards opened from this corridor, with the ward numbers painted beside the wide doorways. Turning at the number which had been given her, she crossed the passage, from which several small rooms opened, and came into the main apartment of the ward, — a long, high, narrow, white room, with a row of little white beds down each side. In every bed lay a man.

The head nurse met her, looked at her card, and seemed at once to understand. "I think the doctor is with him now," she said; "just wait a minute." She disappeared into the passage.

Waiting, Eva looked down the ward. There was not the moan, the tossing, the sight of acute suffering, which she had vaguely expected. The patients seemed very quiet. One, a mere lad with a bandaged head, was propped up on his pillows, eating broth with evident relish. Next him and nearest to Eva a man lay so still that he might have been dead. A tangle of dark hair and a two

weeks' growth of dead black beard made his sunken face look more pallid. Eva was aware of this man's eyes fixed upon her, and in a moment she glanced over at him again. The dark, still eyes seemed to look at her out of a prison, as though he no longer asked for anything, only lay looking, looking —

The nurse returned and beckoned. She led the way, not into the ward but out of it, to one of the small rooms opening from the passage. As soon as Eva saw this little isolated room, the door of which the nurse opened noiselessly, she understood at once, without any explanation, that Soden had been set apart from the others because there was no hope of his recovery. There were three beds in the little room, but only one was occupied. The nurse spoke softly and left her.

Soden lay stretched out like the others. His eyes were closed, adding to the dead look of his face, ghastly in color, sunken, dreadfully stubbled over with his unshaven beard. It needed but a glance to show how sharply his life was stricken. She took the little chair by the cot, silently, to wait his awakening. There was nothing but an immense, solemn pity in her heart, — a compassion which was scarcely personal, for he seemed already set apart from the living. It struck her abruptly, — how foolish to quarrel and to hate! She bent a little toward him, her compassionate eyes upon his face, and with that he opened his dim eyes and looked at her. A shock went through her. The dim intelligence in his eyes seemed to have come

from an immense distance, to have crossed a vast space of separation.

"How are you, Emory?" she asked at once, bending nearer.

The dim intelligence got her within its focus. "I 'm all right, Eva," he mumbled. His voice had a thick sound. His brows contracted painfully. "They give me too much dope," he articulated thickly. In a fresh shock of pity, touched with a strange fear, she realized the struggle of his mind to clear itself of the clouds which darkened it. She could only bend over him, pitiful, waiting. The hand on the white counterpane moved blindly toward her. She gave him her hand. There was still strength in the hot fingers which closed over her cool palm. He brought the clasped hands down to his breast and lay a moment, frowning, with closed eyes.

Again he looked up dimly. "How are you, Eva?" his strange, thick voice asked.

"Oh, I 'm well, Emory." She liked to use the old name. It comforted her a little. This was no longer the man who had injured her, or who might injure her further. It was only the poor, dying bit of humanity, bringing intimately home to her the common human lot.

"I wrote to him — Marvin," said the strange voice. "I wanted to see him — and fix it up about you. I did n't get a divorce; but I will. I want him to treat you right. I want you to have a fair show. I wrote to him, but he did n't answer. Maybe he thinks I did n't mean it square.

But I did. You tell him." He opened his mouth, breathing painfully.

"Never mind — never mind that. It 's all right. Don't think — about me." It was all she could say, trembling a little, tightly clasping his hand, bending over him. She hoped with all her might he would say no more about that.

He was still a few minutes, breathing slowly.

"I never treated you right. I know that" — he began again in his thick, unfamiliar voice.

"No, no, Emory, — don't! don't!" she begged, bending her head close beside his. "Please don't — don't let 's think about that."

"You forgive me?" he asked at length, simply.

"Oh, yes!" she answered quickly.

He lay silent for some minutes, holding her hand. Presently she saw that he was dozing. After a time he looked dimly up at her again, but he did not try to talk.

He roused when the time came for her to go.

"I 'll come again," she said.

"Yes, come again," said the thick voice. He looked dimly up at her. "It 's lonesome here."

Ah, lonesome at the door! He seemed to have no fear of what was coming — only it was lonesome. She kissed his brow; not that he needed the caress, for he seemed already singularly beyond its touch, strangely cut off from the world. But the act was her submission, the offer of her love to all the departing.

Outside the hospital she thought: "He wrote

to Philip, and Philip would not answer." It was the touch which precipitated things that had long been held stubbornly in solution in her mind, of which she had been afraid to think squarely. She was not afraid to think of them now. Philip had not told her about Mrs. Hollingshead. He had let her blunder on. He had his preferences for Miss Worthington's society. Her vulgarity secretly shamed and vexed him. He held himself carelessly aloof from her. And she was not really his wife. She was really only his mistress. Nothing except his devotion could redeem what she had done and make it right. If he was indifferent, then, indeed, she was only his mistress.

Why had she been so dreadfully afraid of the policeman? Before Philip's time, she had done no such wrong that she was in terror of its consequences. Why had she wished Soden dead? There must be something wrong in her situation, — a weak place, a spot of guilt.

She comprehended indefinitely that in Philip's world there were refinements, new gospels, different standards. But it all came back to very simple ground. She had done what was righteously forbidden, and some way the justification for doing it had failed. She could not make it seem wrong as of the time when she gave herself to Philip; but in some mysterious way it had grown into a wrong.

It came into her mind: If she had been going to see Soden a year ago, say, before this relationship with Philip had been established, how vastly differ-

ent it would have been then. She saw that former state with a sudden luminousness. Then, nothing had made her ashamed and afraid.

She came often to the hospital. She began to know its ways and aspects. These men, each laid in his narrow white cot under the long white walls seemed to blot all the color out of life, to reduce it to the final, simplest terms. To be born in travail, to work for bread, to sicken and die, — they seemed to print this simple, solemn story in gigantic characters. She knew the children's ward, — off the same corridor which led to Soden's, — where the little starvelings from the street were gathered. Those who could walk about appeared strangely shy, oddly dumb. But there was one, named Bobby, scarcely four years old, imprisoned in a plaster cast up to his hips and set in a wheeled chair, who was much brighter than the others. She saw his bright, intelligent eyes watching her the first time she entered the ward, and when she spoke to him, he set up a conversation at once. In his babyish lisp and with baby-like seriousness he told her about his trouble. By Christmas, if he was a good boy, he would be sent home, and then he could walk again. He told her the gossip of the ward, pushing his wheeled chair to point out a child whose ailment he described as he had made it up from words dropped by the doctors and nurses.

"You see," said the nurse, "he has a mother who comes to see him three times a week, and who loves him." And Eva understood that this child,

who seemed so attractive, so lovable, had been beautified and made more precious by love.

So, in going and coming to see Emory, she came to know the hospital, — this long city of suffering in the midst of the huge, careless town. Money counted everywhere else. But here, the only sesame was: "I am sick." The doors swung without price to admit the hurt and the helpless. In her civic ignorance, she took the facts at their face value. She had no sense of the organization, still less of the politics, behind the machinery. It seemed to put life back upon a higher and simpler footing. It evoked a more active religious sense within her, as though here at last the wounded Christ arose.

X

Philip was dressing. The blue flannel suit, new from the tailor, and the limp shirt with its large pearl buttons suggested summer. Already the strong early sun poured a palpable warmth into the bedroom. Neither the new clothes nor the new summer pleased him. The emptiness of the little bedroom oppressed his mind. It was early, and Eva was not there. Now and then, involuntarily, he glanced at the bed, the one untouched pillow vaguely evoking a forlorn sense of loneliness.

He heard Eva enter the outer room, and felt the impulse to run to her; but his pride and bad conscience were in the way. She was giving herself to Soden just as, a little while before, she had been giving herself to Mrs. Hollingshead, in spite of his tacit disgust. So many things had got between them that nothing could flow from him spontaneously. Even when he was about to call, "That you, Eva?" the sullen helplessness intervened. He heard her coming through the tiny hall; then he said, "Hello! You back?" with a feeble disingenuousness which he hated.

She stood in the doorway. "Emory is dead," she said gravely; and suddenly, with her colorless face, she seemed extraordinarily tall and straight.

Her deep blue eyes looked at him with a solemnity which abruptly made her seem far above him, as though she had come down to him from the court of death, invested with a higher dignity and power. He envied her. He who loved beauty and cultivated taste perceived in a luminous flash that she who simply went her unpremeditated way had come into the finer experience; had been ennobled by the touch of something grand and everlasting.

Almost at once she went on: "He died at four o'clock. He did n't know anybody all night." She took off her hat and began unfastening her necktie. "They 're going to take the body to the train at three o'clock, so I must go back."

Philip busied himself with buttoning his vest. "Do you think that necessary?" he asked in a low voice. "You 're so tired," he added dishonestly.

"I 'll be all right after I 've slept awhile," she replied. She was already getting out of her clothes, dropping them from her like a person half dead from weariness. He saw that her mind and body were so tired that she took everything for granted, unable to attend to anything except the imperative need of rest.

For two days she had scarcely slept. Soden had not recognized her the whole night before he died. But she felt it good to be there beside him, nearer even than the heavy uncle, who had come on from some place in Iowa. She sat beside him when he died. She held his dead hand. She bowed her head to the pillow and wept. But the tears, the

long sobs, the precious agony in her heart, were not really for Soden. They were for the little crippled boy, for the wretched children, for the black-bearded man, with his large eyes eloquent of pain, for the women in the maternity ward, bringing forth life with mortal pains in shame or in poverty; they were her love, giving itself forth in pain, and passing out to the endless human passion.

She could not, at that time, think of Soden's death as relating personally to herself. Now, she was too weary to think of anything. It was in her mind that she must get up in time to go to the train with the heavy uncle. She wished to do that last office; to make that last acknowledgment. Then she could say: "It is finished." Her tired brain was aware that there would be something new for her and Philip, but now she must sleep. She was getting into bed when Philip went softly out of the room.

He took his hat, so that he would not have to return to the apartment after breakfast, and when he stepped into the hall, he closed the door behind him swiftly, but very carefully, so as to make no noise. He had the sense of stealing out, of running away, of seeking to escape. Out in the hall this sense was so strong that he suddenly decided not to go to the hotel dining-room, but to leave the building at once, taking breakfast at a restaurant on the way to the publishing house. This would make his escape the more sure. Behind this sense of stealing out, of seeking to escape, lay a half formless, half intangible dread that Eva was about to

call him to account, to demand an understanding, to ask him what he meant and intended. These two feelings — one that she was about to demand an accounting, an explanation, an understanding; the other that he must escape from it if he could — had long been in his mind.

The last three weeks, while she had been going so much to the hospital, he had been left freer than before. He had found some new acquaintances and some new interests, besides the old ones. But even amid the pleasant interests, there had lain in his mind that secret fear that she was about to demand an explanation, and the secret instinct to slip around it. The very night before, when he had gone the unusual length of staying out all the evening without having told her beforehand, he had experienced an immense relief, upon coming home, to find that she had not returned, and that the plausible excuse which he had framed would after all not be needed.

There was nothing wrong in his evening's amusement. He had been in Burroughs's studio, with an eminently proper company. But so far as Eva was concerned, he seemed to have mysteriously lost the power of acting spontaneously and ingenuously. Everything had to filter through the tortuous subconsciousness in which lay the dread of being called to account, and the instinct to escape it.

He could go on and satisfy his reason as to his position respecting Eva; but he could not satisfy his feeling. He had begun by desiring her beauty, her bloom, the comfort of her warmth and vigor,

the flattery of her admiring sympathy. His desire led him to accept a great sacrifice from her, to take her with the left hand, on terms which put her within his power. He loved her. He would have given her his life. He would have given her all the strength of his body. But there was something else, — a region which she did not know. In spite of his love, down in the lowest and oldest corner of his heart there had been a strange, monstrous, mean, male exultation at having overcome her, at having made her surrender to him without the formal treaty, the public avowal, the due bond. The shabby Dearborn Avenue lodging-house at first secretly appealed to the strange, mean sex will, as though it were something half clandestine, imposing no ties upon him. Her generosity shamed him. The shabby lodging-house tormented his conscience, not so much for itself, as for what it had been inscrutably associated with in the depths of his mind. When the chance to right himself came, he seized it in an heroic burst of gratitude and devotion. It seemed to him that in taking Eva to the hotel, giving her fine surroundings, and putting her in the way of agreeable interests, he had atoned for whatever was wrong at the lodging-house. They were husband and wife. He was placing his wife in pleasant conditions. He felt free. He found pleasant interests of his own, which took him somewhat away from her. He could not regard those interests as other than important, because they had to do with culture. He thought it a certain duty to himself to pursue them. That they

were lost to Eva was her irreparable misfortune. He frankly considered himself her superior mentally, and he could tell himself that the superiority implied some things which it was only fair that she should recognize. She took up with the Hollingsheads against his wish. He had tried to warn her. She would not let him. Then Soden came in. She had been going to the hospital two or three times a week for three weeks; latterly she had been there most of the time. What could he do? Soden did not want him. It would be ridiculous for him to pretend any special sympathy for that man. Soden's intrusion was simply disagreeble. It contained the threat of a vulgar and compromising dénouement. He was already committed to a certain social position. He had taken a certain place with his agreeable new acquaintances. He felt himself imbedded in a certain social frame, from which a scandal might wrench him with hurts. He and Eva were married. They were husband and wife. He was determined on that. Any other determination would be extremely unpleasant. As to his people, it was unfortunate that he had not told them at first about his marriage. To bring it in just now would be rather awkward. If he could get around that difficulty, — slipping down to Detroit to see his sister for a few days; then coming back and presently announcing the marriage, — why, everything would soon fall into order, especially now that Soden was out of the way, and there would be no further trouble.

He wished to be happy. Everything had finally

turned out for his happiness. He who had been so lonely achieved Eva, whom he loved. After the galling restrictions of his poverty, he came into more money, with its opportunities for wider, freer living. After his barren detachment, he found sympathetic, stimulating companions. The pictures in his mind found a screen upon which they could project themselves. Out of his hungry void, a snug, pleasant little world was emerging. The needs of his body provided for, with a free scope of action, with materials upon which he could impress such powers as he had, the old haunting promise of happiness seemed about to grow concrete and tangible in his hands. Then a few stupid little inadvertencies got in the way, — a matter of commonplace misunderstanding with one's wife; of going off to see one's sick sister when, perhaps, one's wife wished one to go some place else. What had happened between himself and Eva since they came to the hotel was commonplace enough. What more common than some differences of taste between husband and wife, some jolts and clashes? He could make this look plausible enough. What could be more grotesque than to wreck one's little world, so long and painfully sought, achieved with such difficulty, over a mere commonplace inadvertence? He could tell himself that it would be grotesque. But there was a danger point, a bar, a difficult strait, a perilous pass just ahead, in this matter of going to Detroit to see a sister who did not know of Eva's existence, when he had promised her to go to Nebraska. Well, he must slide over

that bar, he must dodge through the pass the best he could, — and after that, it would come out all right.

He kept stubbornly rehearsing the thing, in something like this form, in his tortuous and troubled thoughts. It could appear quite simple, — given that he managed to sail safely through the one difficult strait, — and then, when it was simplest, his mind helplessly formed the sad picture of Eva going off alone to sit by that dying man, unfriended, unsustained by her husband, as she had been unfriended in that wreck of her poor, foolish little social venture. It seemed to put her an immense distance from him, to put her whole life and poverty, suffering, death, forgiveness, — a vast body of things, — into the space between them. It was not thus that she had come to him, giving all.

Well, there was his mother — Elmira — He must manage somehow to slip through that one pass, to wriggle over that one bar, to get to Detroit and turn Elmira safely back to East Fairfax. Then everything could get fixed satisfactorily. He stuck to this idea with all the inertia of his lax will. Beset and confused by difficulties, he turned with fixed helplessness to this one device which promised an outlet.

XI

"When I went away, I didn't expect that I'd come back and find you a howling swell," said Sarah.

She had returned the day before. She sat in the front room of the apartment with Eva. She looked older and more frail. There were some new fine lines at the corners of her pale eyes. Her costume was not that of the trig Sarah of the year before.

She had taken in the size and veneered splendors of the hotel. She had looked over the apartment and admired Eva's gowns. She had gone back to the social affairs of which Eva's letters during the winter had given so many alluring glimpses. She had come to admire; but she had found Eva strangely reluctant. Most of all, she had come with an imagination full of romance. She had suspected the facts from the abruptness of Eva's announcement, from her failure to mention a divorce. But she had found Eva silent on this ground.

"No, I'm not a swell, Sarah," said Eva. "I hardly go anywhere any more."

Sarah turned her gloves over in her hands. What was the matter with Eva, any way? There was this wall between them; this reluctance all

around on Eva's part. Her friend seemed glad to see her. When it came to asking about herself, her illness, her plans for going back to work in the publishing house, she was eager, sympathetic, affectionate, — the old Eva. Possibly Emory Soden's recent death oppressed her.

"At any rate, you 've got a steady job," she suggested lightly.

"Yes," said Eva, and smiled a little. Then, without any preamble: "You know I 'm not really married, Sarah; I mean there was n't any ceremony." It had been pressing upon her mind ever since Sarah began praising her gowns and admiring the social affairs which she had been brought reluctantly to tell of.

"I supposed that was the way it was," said Sarah, with a sharpening of interest.

"Yes; it was that way," said Eva. "I 'd heard that Emory was divorced; but we did n't know for sure, — and this seemed the best way for us. At any rate, if there was any risk, I took the risk. I did n't wish him to take it. It seemed right that I should take it because I had made the mistake in the first place."

"But Emory is dead now," Sarah suggested.

"Yes; but he was alive then."

Neither said anything more. It was inconclusive enough. Yet they both felt that the wall had been breached.

On her way to see Sarah at the Tomb, Eva turned aside and took another car, — one that went to the hospital. She had not meant to go back

there; but an irresistible impulse drew her. It was so little out of the way.

She wished to visit the children's ward, especially to see the little crippled boy, the child that had been beautified and made more precious by love. He — this forlorn little crippled waif — could give her that for which her heart dumbly yearned. The irresistible impulse sent her to the hospital and to him.

"You did n't come back," the child called in his baby speech, at first sight of her. "Did you have to go to Michigan?" Then, with a softening of the voice: "Your man died. Did you know that?" He had discovered the fact some way with that sharp, restless little intelligence which now shone in his bright eyes. He took both her disappearance and her coming as a matter of course, — the sort of things which were continually happening in his world of inflexible hospital rules. Eva sat beside the wheeled chair to which he was fixed, buried up to the waist in his hard plaster cast. He asked her endless questions, sometimes the most puzzling, sometimes merely baby-like. He wished to touch the flowers on her hat, to see how the buckle of her belt unclasped. He coaxed her head down, slyly whispering in her ear to bring him a stick of candy when she came again, cautioning her that she must not let the nurses see it. For a moment they held a little conspiracy, whispering to each other as to how the candy might be smuggled in, until Eva whispered that the man downstairs took all the candy away from people

who entered, promising him a whole box of candy when he got out of the hospital "before Christmas." He contemplated the enormous promise in silence a moment. "Do you suppose there 'd be a candy cat in it?" he asked doubtfully. Assured as to that, he sighed contentedly. He told her about the new patients in the ward, some of whom he pointed out, babbling of the ailments of these other babies in a knowing way, and with a sympathy founded on experience, which wrung the woman's heart. He asked what he liked of her, knowing instinctively that she loved him and he could command her. The slim, tow-headed girl who had been crying from loneliness drew shyly near, sat on a bench, and devoured this good visitor with her eyes. The grave urchin, cursed in his blood before birth, discovered her, and came to her side, leaning against her knees, listening to Bobby's chatter with his solemn air.

The very pathos of these hurt, suffering children inscrutably nourished the woman's sad heart. She drew a strength out of her sympathetic pain. This suffering subtly called to her. Here, at least, among these poor humans she had some value. A curious emotion kept stirring in her breast, as though she could bend down and whisper in Bobby's ear: "Ask Philip to love me again; tell him that I 'm good and love him." It seemed to her that these puny little ailing hands might some way bring Philip back to her, if only they knew the way.

She was waiting, dumbly, for that. She had

never for a moment forgotten what had come to her so clearly the day she first visited the hospital. Her position had become wrong. She had been made ashamed and afraid. Philip went on in his troubled sloth. He had stood far from her during the travail of Soden's sickness and death. The death opened the way for a marriage; but Philip seemed not to see it. Instinctively it had come to her that he did not intend to go to Nebraska with her in July. It seemed to her now that they could not go without first being married. It had not appeared to her that way at all in the early winter, in the glow of their honeymoon. Then she could have gone to her father as Philip's wife with a free heart. But all had unaccountably changed since then; and she knew that to stand before her father at this moment and call herself Philip's wife would make her ashamed. It was Philip who had made her say to herself those ineradicable words: "I am his mistress — not his wife."

The words still had the power to scorch her through and through. But she dumbly waited, hoping. There was a time, she thought, when she would not have been ashamed. She had left Soden precisely for that. The fact and its significance sometimes appalled her. That would mean to leave Philip, too —

She thought she was losing her courage; had already lost it, perhaps. She could not look out at the world now as when she left Soden. Then, she had even had a certain zest for making her way; she had faced it with courage and eagerness.

But now, the thought of a publishing house, a restaurant, of looking for a poor job, of again going down into the ruck and moil of the mill, was indescribably dreadful. Yes, she must have lost her courage. Good living had corrupted her. She had deserted the simple, homely way which was best for her, and it was hard to go back. She felt herself immeasurably older. Even her bodily vigor and endurance seemed to have diminished of late. For a week she had been strangely ailing, — she who was never ill. Maybe — maybe — Philip would come back to her.

She did not go to the hospital the following week, as she had proposed. She felt oddly indisposed. Three weeks passed.

She sat on the edge of the bed, half dressed, her hair tumbled over her bare shoulders in a disordered mass, her face white as though a sponge had passed over it, wiping out all the color. She was aware of the oppressive heat of the early June, of objects about the room which in a vague and mysterious way repulsed her with the indifference of their inanimate repose. There was a vague mocking in the solidity of that chair, that shoe. She was even remotely aware of Philip moving about in the outer room as though he were already in another world.

A moment of nausea, of unknown disquietude in the very centre of her body, had just passed; and abruptly she had known the truth. The sword, the destiny which for two weeks had been upon her horizon, desperately fought off, denied, fled from,

now suddenly approached her mind, stood naked, ominous, unavoidable before her.

There was to be a child.

In the immense, half-stunning shock imparted to her mind, she dimly felt its perfect inexorableness, — a judgment made up of her own body; her own flesh and blood, binding her to the wheel. She feared it in every nerve. The very marrow of her bones shrank and cowered before it. In the shock and fear, all that was wrong in her position, the alienation from Philip, his indifference, the touch of her shame, came together in one blent, acute emotion, so dreadful that it sickened her; that she sickly failed before it, feeling as though she must shriek, cry out, implore Philip to run in and sustain her in his arms.

From a distance she heard his voice calling: "Are you coming?" with a slight touch of impatience.

She articulated "Yes."

At the sound of his preoccupied, slightly impatient voice, there was another fear, one quite unexpected and inexplicable — that, namely, of having him come in and find her thus undone and helpless. She stood up like one ailing, trembling a little. She began bathing her face, combing her hair, dressing.

With these motions of her hands and body, mechanical at first and weak as those of a sick person, the habit of living began coming back to her numb mind, as though even these small efforts brought vitality back to her. Her hands grew in

certainty. Her mind slowly erected itself. The possibility of living flowed slowly into her emptied being. Presently she walked steadily into the other room.

Philip flung down his newspaper and sprang up, smiling. "I thought you must be making a state toilet," he said, in good-natured banter.

In the free motion of his limbs, in his good humor, his eagerness for breakfast, in everything about him as he stood before her in easy action, large, robust, hungry, smiling, the woman perceived the free male, the creature whose part was not to bear, whose bodily exemptions gave him a liberty, even an irresponsibility, letting him move at will about the world. She felt an odd, deep sex envy of this male liberty, an odd blind rebellion against it. Why should she be bound and he be free?

Philip seemed in the best of humor. He was attentive to her throughout breakfast, talking gayly of nothing in particular. It might almost have been their untroubled days again. He even came back to the apartment after breakfast, instead of going straight off to the publishing house. He had forgotten a handkerchief.

He stood a moment in the sitting-room, between the tiny hall and the outer door, the handkerchief in his hand, with his effect of light good humor. Then he stepped toward her, and she perceived, with a great, quick flutter and failing of her heart, with an immense pain, that he was about to kiss her, as he used always to do before leaving the apartment. For some months the custom had lapsed.

In the mere hasty glance Philip thought she looked at him with something almost like terror. Then she stood on tiptoe and kissed him, her eyes closed. In spite of himself there was a certain self-consciousness, a certain awkwardness, in his act. He muttered " Good-by " and hurried out.

He went rapidly along the hall and ran down the flight of stairs rather than wait for an elevator, as though he were being pursued.

He was, in fact, in a headlong flight, overwhelmed with panic, loathing himself and fearing everything about him. It had all come over him again with a big rush in that moment when she looked at him half terrified, then stood up with shut eyes to kiss him. He had stood far away from her in her trouble. He had denied her his help. He had been careless of his obligation to her. He had accepted her sacrifice and treated it lightly. He had made her unhappy. He now meditated a betrayal of her in running off to see Elmira and ignoring the promised visit to Nebraska, which was so important to her because it was a sort of more formal and binding reacknowledgment of her as his wife. The worst was, that he had taken pains to be agreeable in order to prepare her for the announcement that he was going to see Elmira. He hated himself for that Judas-kiss. He wondered whether there was any end to his moral laziness, his easy selfishness, his cowardice, his inertia. He seemed to himself abandoned, helpless. There was a moment, as he hurried out of the hotel, when it was only the turn of a hair whether he should not

run back, take her in his arms, offer his whole self to her, put her before everything else.

But the commonplace aspect of the street got mysteriously in the balance. The long stretch of asphalt, scantily shaded by some bright green trees, lined by an interminable procession of solid, commonplace houses, seemed to allege that the frame of things was not going to disjoint over a strain upon somebody's emotions. The noisy, overladen cable train which cut across the vista a few blocks to the north seemed to preach the triumph of the ordinary, the matter-of-fact; seemed to raise before Philip's mind a whole world of material every-day things, in which one having the price could move about comfortably enough. His sense of himself as being well dressed, tolerably well placed and prosperous, helped the return of his comfortable inertia. It was as though this sense of prosperity, this knowledge of his ability to command his way about, made a sort of buffer, a kind of sheath for his conscience, — the conscience against which his dereliction had nakedly pressed in the lodging-house days of his bare, undefended poverty. At any rate, he could make it up to Eva when he got back from Detroit, — when this one disagreeable strait was passed.

The strait, however, was to be passed. Another letter from Elmira reminded him that the day was just ahead.

He could still make the thing look amazingly sincere. A man had a sick sister whom he wished to visit. What wife, the most jealous and tyrannical,

could object to that? What reasonable man would find it difficult to go? Yet this did not help his bad conscience. He had accepted her sacrifice and then treated it carelessly. He had taken her with the left hand, on unequal terms, and he had failed in the height of devotion which would have saved her pride. They had made a unique compact, which could not be carried out in a commonplace way. With another woman, — one, perhaps, who was not so hopelessly American — it would have been different. But she, with her rustic traditions, founded on Puritanism, with her practical, orthodox view of things, was difficult material for an unsanctioned romance. Applied to her, the very form and sound of certain French words signifying love and love affairs seemed inexpressibly grotesque.

Well, one must wriggle through the difficult strait some way, and fix things up afterwards.

"I had a letter from Elmira to-day — my sister, you know." Philip spoke the words with his best effect of good humor the moment he entered the door, and he burst in like one excited by pleasant news. "She and her husband are coming out to Detroit next week to some sort of church convention. She 's very ill, you know." He put on a grave face. "I suppose there 's no chance of her recovery. I was afraid I could n't get to see her for a good while."

As he went through this bit of acting, it lay darkly in the back of his mind that it was the nadir, the very bottom of the trough of his cowardice and laziness.

Nevertheless, when Eva answered quietly, "I hope she 'll get better," he felt a relief. There was nothing he hated so much as a scene. He felt relieved because her calmness appeared to assure him that he could do his little murder quietly, without any unseemly struggling on his victim's part. It seemed that he had exaggerated the difficulty.

"I thought I 'd go down there Wednesday week, say, and stay a few days — a week or so," he went on, anxious to have it over with, and encouraged.

"I can have the laundry sent back by Wednesday morning," she replied.

It struck him then that the calm was too perfect. It had been too perfect of late, as though she had nothing more to say. But, after, all Eva was a sensible girl, and when the last bad strait was passed, he would make it up to her. An impulse of affection stirred in him now. It was not fair. He ought to explain, to assure her, to pledge himself, to comfort her with visible signs of love. But that calm had the effect of thin ice. He was afraid of an upheaval, of a scene, of being called to account. If one had a limb to cut off, it was best to cut quick and look away. He felt the atmosphere of pain. He knew he was hurting her. Her unhappiness wounded his heart. But he must get through this as well as he could.

"Let 's go to dinner; I 'm hungry as a bear," he said, although he had seldom felt less zest for eating.

They came back to the apartment after dinner.

Again Philip felt that atmosphere of pain like a living presence in the room. Her unhappiness wounded his heart. He had an acute consciousness of her as she picked up the evening paper and went over to the lounge in the corner. He stepped to the bookcase. In a moment she spoke.

"Philip, did you ever tell Elmira and your mother — about me?" She asked it very quietly.

The suddenness of the question startled him into an unpremeditated reply. "No, I have n't yet," he said hurriedly. "I 'm going to tell her when I go to Detroit." Instinctively he avoided mentioning his mother. "We don't correspond very much. She 's rather fussy and emotional in her sickness. I felt I could tell her better orally. I 'm going to tell her when I see her."

The words seemed to flow out of his mouth by a power of their own, without his will. He dared not look around and see his wife's face. It seemed to him that something namelessly sordid had happened. He had the indescribably uncomfortable feeling that his back was stripped to her gaze, and branded with guilt. Oddly, he was aware that his hands were perspiring. The right one stuck to the back of a book. The whole air of the room was intolerable. He went on blindly, fingering the books, until, after a long moment, Eva spoke again.

"I thought I might go out to Nebraska while you were gone," she said.

"Yes, do! do!" said Philip eagerly. His mind clutched at the suggestion with a certain wildness.

"You can go when I do. It 's a good idea. The trip will do you good." He glanced around now with a kind of strained benevolence. "You have n't seemed first-rate lately. The trip will do you good. Why don't you go?" he urged, and his urging, his enforced look of benevolence, the very fact of their presence together in the room, seemed to him a kind of gruesome farce, something like death grotesquely simulating life.

She sat quietly on the lounge, the newspaper in her hands, looking down at it.

This calm was ominously perfect.

The man felt the full misery of the situation. The very air of the room was intolerable. To sit down at that table and pretend to read, fifteen feet from her, seemed a dismal torture; seemed monstrous, inhuman, as though they were two strange animals, shut up together in a narrow cage, secretly contriving each other's destruction. He took his book with downcast eyes, and stepped to the place of torment by the table.

After he was seated, Eva lifted her blind eyes and looked over at him. She noticed his ear; the way the curly red of his beard met his straight, darker hair, which was combed smoothly down from the middle of his tall head. She noticed the breadth of his cheek.

The force within her had slowly driven her on to find out the things which she must know, which yet must break her heart. He had never acknowledged her to his own people. He did not intend to go to Nebraska with her to see her people. He

had no idea of offering her marriage now that Soden was dead.

She could not stand still in her wrong. The mill ground on. While she had waited, this judgment of the child had come upon her. That had happened, not in the first blinding glow of their love, but after her eyes had been opened, while she waited, doubtful, sorrowful, hoping, her courage bending beneath her. Her courage had been small and weak, and this judgment of the child had come upon her as a kind of mortal warning. She had no reasons about it. The strongest instincts within her were speaking. The child was the very soul of the problem. She must save herself for its sake. She could not bear a child as a mistress, as a woman who felt ashamed. She had no reasons about it — only instincts. At the base of her being there was an impassioned sense of oneness with this unborn being. She and the child were the same.

Staring blindly over at Philip's head and shoulders, she saw her fate before her. She set her feet toward it. The judgment had been pronounced. She had no time now for remorse, for looking back; no time for accusing Philip. He moved strangely away from her. She had no time to think about him any more. There was only this strange, single-hearted absorption in her fate. Everything else was blotted out in this passion. There was a kind of deadness to other things, as though all her force went to feed this single flame.

XII

Sarah did not try housekeeping, but she had the front room on Boarding-House Row, taking breakfast and dinner with the solemn landlady and her sociable, coatless husband.

She sat alone on the front steps, this late June afternoon, waiting for dinner. It was warm. The full-leaved willow-trees rustled murmurously in a light breeze. The front steps were populous. Many of the lodgers had already dined. Several couples were going off on bicycles.

Sarah was almost shabby. The shirt waist and skirt were of the summer before. She was saving her money. She looked more frail. The pale eyes looked tired. The small, homely, freckled face was thinner and older. Only the tiara of red hair was as magnificent as ever. It even seemed more luxuriant, as though it were slowly drawing the life out of her and flourishing as she failed.

All this struck Eva afresh as she came up to the steps.

"Why, hello, there! Where you been the last week?" Sarah called. Her pale eyes lighted up; her thin face softened in a smile.

Eva came up the steps. At once, in an odd way, she felt something enduring in this frail,

almost shabby little figure, something unconquerable which would outlast bigger things.

"I've been in to see Dr. Brown," she explained. "I have n't been feeling quite well lately." Sarah's keen eyes noticed a touch of abstraction, as though her friend spoke half mechanically.

"You ought to come oftener. The social circle is n't what it used to be, now that the divinity students have gone away. Did they come to see you? No? Well, the tall one wanted to. He 's an adventurous man. But the fat one could n't get his courage up, I guess."

Sarah rattled on, talking about everything that came into her head. In a few moments Eva was talking, too; gossiping, asking about this neighbor and that whom she had known of before, — even about the new style in hats, when that came up.

Sarah gave a little pull at her sleeve. "Here comes Thompson," she said in a low voice, although the tall, thin, stooped figure was still out of hearing. As he approached, Eva saw that he had grown shabbier. The black frock coat hung in hard wrinkles, as though it had been cast that way, and it shone as from interminable polishings. The drab trousers protruded at the knee, and were frayed at the bottoms. She identified the "Sunday suit," the ceremonial dress of Hopeville, now in the last stages of decrepitude and used for everyday. Then she knew that the cheap, ill-fitting pepper-and-salt sack coat in which he had called on her at the hotel was his Sunday best. He had called only twice. She had not urged him over-

much to come again. She had been once to see his mother, who had come in from Hopeville and now lived with him in two shabby rooms a block beyond the Tomb ; but the politely iterated project of calling with his mother at the hotel had never been carried out. Eva knew why well enough. Philip had been perfectly polite to Thompson at the hotel, and she had been as cordial as she could ; but the imposing establishment and the pepper-and-salt suit were in the way. Philip, for all his politeness, was in the way. The boy with the brass buttons was in the way.

Even now, as Thompson stopped on the flagging, lifting his faded hat, Eva detected the slight air of embarrassment, of self-consciousness. When he came up the steps and shook hands, the shabby coat seemed for the moment to be trying to hide itself from the stylish dress.

She gathered up her skirts to make a place for him on the step, keeping her face turned to him, not smiling, but alight with affection. She had a kind of love for his very shabbiness. When he sat down, she began asking him how he was doing, whether he was working at the same place, what he heard from home, how his mother liked it in the city. In a few moments he was talking to her with sober freedom, as between two old friends who understood each other's conditions. His wage had been raised by two dollars a week at the wholesale house. Moreover, there was the hope of a job on the road, which would pay him eighty-five dollars a month and traveling expenses. They

had finally rented the little home in Hopeville for five dollars a month. Eva listened to these money details with perfect seriousness, with complete sympathy, commenting with her practical good sense.

As to the man who was so shabby and wrinkled, with his troubles about getting a job, with his gentle, hopeful effect of defeat, she felt herself strong, capable, helpful. It was only over there at the hotel that she was helpless, and that nobody had any particular use for her. To her inner sense, in a strange way, her old world seemed to be rising up around her, to be coming vitally into her life again on all sides, — the world of simple things, of getting a job, of daily earning the daily bread, of small, careful economies; the world in which one lived so simply, so near to the ground, so near to his fellow worker. She felt both simplified and strengthened, as though in this atmosphere what she had to do was less difficult; as though the sympathy, the human love which she had given, had all gone into this simpler world, and here she would find it again in her own need.

Thompson kept looking up at her with his mild, serious blue eyes. He sat so close to her that he felt himself within the intimate atmosphere of her beauty and vigor. Something like an emanation of this beauty and vigor seemed to stir in the threads of her shining hair, to bloom on her almost colorless cheeks. She wore a summer dress of a dark blue material, with a large white figure in the cloth, and a large black hat. She looked the

well-groomed, well-dressed woman. In a way the apparel was fit, like a due integument, a properly fine husk, for the splendid body whose strong, graceful lines it revealed. Yet the costume subtly wounded Thompson. It was not jealousy, for he had felt long before that she was forever impossible for him. It was a vague suggestion of sophistication; an almost intangible and impersonal sense of oppression and defeat because the prosperous world had picked her out of their poor world, calmly claiming its best. He thought her finer and more beautiful as he had seen her at the restaurant.

The landlady came to the door to say that dinner was ready, and thawed a little into a kind of bodiless cordiality toward Eva. Then Sarah urged her to stay to dinner. It tempted her. She felt her old, poor simple world rising up around her, and she drew strength from it. After all, what would it matter if she were not at the hotel for dinner? She agreed to stay; but first, as Thompson rose to go, she walked down the street with him. They had nothing definite to talk of, but she liked to be with him. They loitered a minute before the steps of his lodging-house, — another Tomb, — to see whether his mother would not look out of the upper window so that Eva could call "How d' do?" to her.

"Tell her I 'm coming to see her in a few days," she said to Ernest over her shoulder, as she hurried back to Sarah.

It was a poor enough dinner, and the coatless,

sociable landlord did most of the talking. But Eva found herself almost cheerful, smiling, talking to the landlord, to the solemn landlady, to Sarah. There was always something behind the cheerfulness, — an inexorable hand which gripped her heart; a strange, single absorption in her fate; a concentration of all her deeper forces to feed the one flame. It was like the mechanical activities of the prisoner, putting on his clothing, eating his breakfast, talking with his jailer, on the morning of his execution, oddly comforted in his bodily nerves by the touches of life, even while the gallows shaped itself against his soul. It was as though in the moment of laughing her heart might suddenly break in two; at her most cheerful word, tears might flow.

After dinner she went upstairs. The familiar aspect of the front room, the worn, grayish carpet, the dim mirror in its tarnished gilt frame, the fly-specked chandelier with many of its glass pendants missing, at once revealed themselves to her with an immensely tragic effect. Their inanimate changelessness seemed to tell her of a vast, inscrutable, uncaring frame of things, like a kind of gigantic trap, inexorably ready to crush her if she stepped wrong, but indifferent whether her steps were right or wrong, above all, never changing. This, to her loving and love-hungry human heart, seemed the most terrible. How free she had been here only a little while before!

Sarah was talking away. She had brought out the two new shirt waists which she had at last

allowed herself. She was praising their cheapness.

"I do dote on shirt waists," she said. "But don't you ever wear 'em any more?" — with a glance at Eva's costume. "Aren't they in the best style now?"

"Oh, I guess they 're worn as much as ever," said Eva, with an effect of indifference. She felt very uneasy.

"I thought you liked them. You 'll have some later on, won't you?" Sarah persisted, in her aimless gossip.

"I don't know — I guess not," Eva replied quickly, with greater embarrassment.

Sarah paused abruptly. Her sharp eyes rested upon her friend's face. Thus in an instant between the two women, — in the sharp glance of the one and the averted eyes of the other, in that other's very pose, in the very position of her inert hands, — a woman's question was asked and helplessly answered. Eva knew that Sarah knew.

At once, without premeditation, her hands hanging at her sides, Eva turned full to her friend.

"Do you think, Sarah," she began slowly, in a voice whose steadiness seemed to take all the strength in her body, — "do you think — you could help me some — later on?" She drew a long breath, laboriously filling her lungs, as though the machine in there ran heavy and slow. "I don't know 's I 'll need any help — or very much. I could go to the county hospital, if I had to. But

I 'd rather go away, — and of course there 'll be a time when I can't work."

Sarah's blanched face stared up at her, the lips twitching. She seemed utterly unable to speak.

Again Eva took that laborious breath. "You know I ain't really married, Sarah; I won't let — anybody make me ashamed. I can't be ashamed — now that — this is coming. I know I won't be afraid after — this is over with. I can take care of myself — only there 'll be a while I can't do anything for myself — and I don't know anybody but you" —

"I can help you! I'll do it! I want to do it! I 've got some money now! Near a hundred dollars! I'll get more! You shan't go to the county hospital! I can do it! We can! You and I!" Sarah made these exclamations, these little cries, in a kind of breathless rush. She flung herself upon the thing in a passionate whirl. Her blanched face twitched. She did not even try to guess what might have happened between Eva and Philip. She saw nothing but herself and Eva standing together in this supreme woman's trial, making good their own place. She only felt the everlasting woman's tragedy, and her emotion rushed out to meet it, to accept it, to claim it, in a blind passion of loyalty.

The women were silent a moment. They did not embrace, or kiss, or protest, or exclaim. They simply felt themselves united. Even as Eva experienced a certain physical reaction, a lassitude and loosening of the nerves, and found her way a little

blindly over to her chair, Sarah did not offer to help her. She only walked beside her and sat down near her. She felt that Eva would not go into the details. Sarah did not wish her to, then. It was enough to feel themselves united.

Presently Eva said: "Sometimes it seems to me it would be better if there was n't any getting married and depending on the men to support us, — if we women would just go off alone and have our children, and take care of them all ourselves, the way the animals do. Men are not like us, any way. They don't care the way we do. It 's depending on the men to take care of us, I guess, that makes so many women submit to things they ought not to submit to, — like your aunt Marion Thomas and cousin Susie. I don't know, Sarah," — she looked around at her friend with eyes so dry it seemed they would never weep again, — "I 'm only a young woman — I 've tried twice, and both times I 've gone away. It seems the most awful thing I ever heard of."

Sarah bent nearer. "Are you going away now, Eva?" she said, hardly above a whisper. There was an extraordinary docility, an almost childlike deference in her voice and manner. At that moment Eva seemed to her of an unusual size, magnified out of the ordinary human proportions. She felt the breath of the tragedy about this other figure, as though the muffled Fates stood beside it, and she felt small and still in that company.

"Philip is going to Detroit to see his sister

next week. They — his people — don't know about me," was the only reply Eva made.

There was a little pause.

Sarah cuddled to the side of Eva's chair. "We 'll get plenty of money, Eva," she said, in her smallness and stillness. "I know we can do it — plenty."

XIII

Philip slept fitfully, waking often to a confused sense of pain, of oppression, of something dreadful impending, — a sense which at once resolved itself, with a kind of iron, unrelenting regularity, into the trouble of his departure for Detroit. It seemed to him that his very sleep was painful. Eva constantly appeared to him as a victim. Now that he had proposed to sacrifice her rather than his mother, and had made everything ready for the act, all his sympathy went to her.

He remained in his suffering inertia. There was this one bar to be got over, this one strait to be passed. In his troubled misery, the very idea of an effort, a shock, was inexpressibly repugnant, as though merely to move would quicken his pain.

Dawn brought a kind of relief, disclosing the actualness of things, as though his phantom oppressor paled before material objects.

They had got through breakfast, each inwardly so absorbed in dread that the very power of communication with the other seemed to fail, as though each turned wholly in upon self and could give out nothing.

It was abominably painful, this moment of the actual parting. Philip had laid a roll of bills on the centre table. His bag and hat were in his

hand. He smiled slightly, in a lame way, attempting to keep the mask of matter-of-fact, of commonplace. He stepped toward her. Again she lifted herself on tiptoe, with shut eyes, to receive his dry, hasty kiss.

"Good-by, dear," he said, with a constrained attempt at cheerfulness.

She did not answer, and he hurried out.

"Good-by, dear! Good-by, dear!" her heart seemed dumbly to call. Everything was happening outside of her will, as though she were only a bound, suffering spectator of the drama. An independent force bore her along. It was scarcely she herself who was struggling against this failing of body and mind, this immense impulse to throw herself down, to stretch out motionless on the lounge, as though the very laxness of her limbs would be a relief, as though she must cease all action, all effort, let herself sink, drown herself in her grief. What was it that pressed her ruthlessly on, warning her that she must not give way, that she must keep up the habit of life? Her limbs held her stoutly up. As she moved, her fingers twisted together from time to time. She bit her lips. Once she opened her hands and looked at the red imprint of the nails across the palms. She began picking up some things that Philip had scattered, man-fashion, in the room. She took up the bank-notes and put them in a drawer of the writing-desk. Presently she went to the bedroom closet and dragged out the shabby old leather trunk, — the one she had brought from Hopeville, from the

Tomb, from the Dearborn Avenue lodging-house. She began taking the things out of it preparatory to packing. In the tray she found a bundle of letters from her father and two small notes from Philip, the only mementos of her courtship. The trunk brought up disconnected pictures of home, of the Tomb, of Philip. Tears bled silently from her eyes. She brushed them away from time to time, hardly knowing that she was weeping, and went on with her packing.

Philip, meantime, had hurried to the office, put on his jacket, and sat down at his desk in a business-like way. He was whipped and spurred on to hurry, — to hurry, hurry. The minutes were intolerably long. This heavy-footed, stolid, inexorable Time seemed to be slowly pursuing him; rolling up to him and rolling over him in a sluggish, changeless, stupid indifference. If he could only get on the train, get under way, feel the distance lengthening behind him! He stopped in the middle of a long proof. He did not know in the least what it was about, or whether he had read down to the line at which his eyes were staring. He went back to the beginning. Some of it looked familiar, some utterly strange. He glanced up at the clock. The hands seemed stuck fast. Presently he again found himself staring at the proof without knowing what it was about or whether he had read it. He looked down at the litter on his desk, and suddenly he understood that he could not work; his mind, like a clogged machine, would not go.

Sarah passed the door to his den, which was half open. Mechanically he looked up and their eyes met. The little stenographer saw his large, handsome, well-dressed person, bearded as a sign of masculine strength, sitting before the desk. She saw, too, his troubled glance; the look of helpless pain in his brown eyes which had come there as he realized that he could not work, as though he accused the lifeless things upon his desk of conspiring to uselessly torment him.

He vaguely recognized Sarah, and looked away. An instant later, it came to him mechanically that she had paused a little, as though she might be coming in. That would be unpleasant. But he scarcely thought about it. The helpless drift of his mind carried him by it.

It occurred to him with a touch of hope, a faint promise of relief, that he might go away, take a walk, a street-car ride, until near train time. Then he thought that for some mysterious reason Eva might send him word, ask him to come back to the hotel, or come herself to the office, wishing to see him a minute again before he went; and it seemed to him that it would be inexpressibly cruel if she should send or come and find him gone. An exaggerated sense of her disappointment, her loneliness at finding him gone before the hour, pierced him through. He was tied to the stake before that instrument of torture, — a clock.

By and by, quite abruptly, he resolved to go back to the hotel. The idea gave him positive joy. It seemed to him that if he could see her moving

about, in the habit of life, sound, quick, perhaps even cheerful, it would be an immense comfort to him. He could invent an excuse, say he had forgotten something, say even that he wanted to come back just to see her. His sick mind glowed up happily over it, and, for a moment, it seemed entirely feasible.

But, after all, there would only be the second painful leave-taking. It came back to him how he had hurried away from the hotel, hastening from the dangerous ground. Yes, there was still the bad business, the unfortunate situation, between them; there was still his journey to see his own people alone. He fell back into his helplessness. This bar must be got over, this strait passed. It seemed that he must go ahead in the way he had started. He slipped back into a kind of troubled doggedness, a sort of painful callousness. He must go on and get through with it. In time, thank God, everything had an end. He could even make himself do a little perfunctory work. From time to time he sighed over his desk as the heavy minutes dragged by.

Toward noon he was aware of Sarah passing his door and looking in; but he did not glance up this time.

He could not bring himself to go out for lunch. The strangely harrowing idea that Eva might send or come to see him persisted unreasonably in his mind. He sent an office boy for a sandwich and some tea.

The slow hour-hand of the clock performed that

everlasting journey from one side of the dial to the other. That endless phantasmagorical gulf of time was at last passed. In a little while now he would go to the train. A sense of the nearness of the departure touched up his pain-drugged nerves to an acuter feeling, in which he realized more keenly what he had endured since morning. He felt some way as though he had been killed. Again his troubled glance, his hurt eyes, seemed to ask the things on his desk why he had been so uselessly tortured. With a long sigh he pushed back from his desk. At any rate, it was finished. He told the boy to call a cab. Eva was in his mind, but he pushed her aside. Once on the way, once in action, all would come out right. For, after all, what he was doing was a commonplace sort of thing —

Sarah passed his door, glancing in ; then passed again. Philip looked up calmly. Perhaps his features had already assumed an expression of complacency.

The little stenographer whirled about, darted into the office, and shut the door behind her.

Philip stared at her in blank surprise. Her notebook and pencil were in her hand. Her small, homely face was so white that the freckles were oddly distinct. Her pale eyes seemed to grow paler with passion, and to dart their wrath into Philip's mind. She stood before him, a tenseness in her little figure, which bent slightly toward him.

"You devil! You devil!" she whispered, with a dreadful softness. "You 're going away and

leaving her with your child. You 're driving her out with your child, — the child that you 're the father of and she 's going away to have alone because you shame her. Do you understand, you devil? For you are a devil, if ever there was one." Her furious pale eyes stabbed the accusation into his mind. "Ask Dr. Brown, if you don't believe it," she added in the same dreadfully soft whisper.

She turned and left the office, closing the door behind her.

Philip stared at the closed door. In a purely mechanical way his self-respect asserted itself against the affront, as though he must contemptuously deny what the other had contemptuously alleged. He was telling himself, in mere stupid belligerence, that Sarah's performance was a unique impertinence, — coming in there and blackguarding him with her impossible fairy story about a child. As a matter of course. if that had been true —

A child!

The mere suggestion, the bare possibility, grew vast in his brain. He perceived that here was something he must know about, — know to a certainty.

If there was to be a child, as a matter of course he would have known about it; Eva would have told him — He seemed to see her on the further side of that alienation which had come between them; lonely, keeping herself apart from him, busy with her own destiny, which had its own

mysteries, — even possibly this mystery of the beginning of life.

He must know. That was an imperative, unavoidable need, which possessed him wholly. He might question Sarah; but he at once dismissed her contemptuously on account of her impertinence. It occurred to him to go and ask Eva. But that would be too painful; the denial would involve too much humiliation for both of them.

There was Dr. Brown, whom Sarah had mentioned, — the homely, uncouth man, the rude, downright physician, who had seemed always to accuse him, to convict him, and whom he had secretly hated from an instinctive antipathy. But he cared absolutely nothing now for Brown and Brown's judgment. He must know, and the doctor could tell him.

He seized his hat and rushed from his den. As he hurried to the elevator, his mind was so rapt that Sarah might as well have been living in another world. He had forgotten her existence. As he strode by another den, the slight figure inside, huddled weakly against the window-casing, with twitching lips, white as a piece of paper, trying blindly and in vain to lift trembling hands to the keys of the typewriter, was as far from his tumultuous thought as though it had never existed.

When he reached the flagging, Philip ran to the cab. Almost without premeditation, without a motion of his will, he gave the direction, "The Hotel Marlborough," as he sprang into the vehicle.

For somewhere in the tumult of his thought it

had come to him that what Sarah had said was true; that it must be true; and the whole aspect of the world changed.

A child!

But it was not at all of the child itself that he thought, or ever had thought. It was only of Eva as this revealed her. Her generosity, her goodness, her strength, came back to him vitalized and magnified by his emotion, — most of all, her loneliness. He seemed to see her setting her firm feet upon the new, hard road all alone. He was nothing. His little intellectual interests, his little dubious advantage of education, his little shabby pride of place, — all nothing, nothing! A lazy, selfish male animal, good only to breed! He saw himself on the brink of an abominable crime, a detestable, irreparable wrong, and the need of saving himself was so great that he unconsciously reached out to her to help him, in an instinctive faith that she would do it. He had no plan, no idea, no thought. He burst through the bounds of selfishness, his inertia, his moral laziness, in a storm. It was only an impassioned, overwhelming necessity to rush to her, to throw his life before her.

XIV

Eva had finished her packing. She stood by the mantel, one hand resting upon it, looking carefully about the room. In her cold mind there was the consciousness of a great bodily weariness. Her limbs ached for rest. Yet she stood stubbornly in her deep preoccupation, scarcely aware of resisting the strong inclination to sit down, to relax her tired muscles. That dumb power in which she was immersed, and which was carrying her on, seemed to warn her that to stop, to relax, might mean to hesitate, to falter, perhaps to turn back; and she must keep on until she could say: "It is finished." She was conscious of the effort to make a sort of mental inventory, to think whether she had taken anything which she should have left, or left anything which she should have taken. As she leaned her weight a little against the mantel, looking slowly about, she remembered, like a last eruption of the passion of sorrow, like a last glow of the sinking flame, that this was the last time she would see the room. Even as her sunk heart throbbed painfully up at that touch, she wondered vaguely what sort of a poor and shabby room it would be that she would next look upon.

For some uncertain space she had been dimly conscious of an unusual sound. Now, as though

she had known it for some time, she was aware of a commotion in the hotel, — something indefinite; a running and exclaiming. A woman's voice screamed shrilly in the corridor, and, as though that were the solvent, the swelling confusion of exclamations instantly separated itself into many shouted repetitions of the word "Fire." Eva could hear it plainly now. One repetition of the cry rose above the others, accompanied by a succession of sharp knocks on closed doors. The knocking and the warning shout came to her own door; a hand rattled the knob furiously; the messenger passed on up the corridor.

The mere physical impact of the confusion stirred her nerves; but she was quite cool. The idea of personal danger did not occur to her. She glanced at the open window. It would be perfectly simple to climb out there, drop eight feet to the broad roof below, and so escape.

Half a dozen women's voices screamed in the corridor now. The shouting and running, banging of doors, and overturning of furniture rose to a babel. There was another cry and knock at her door.

She stepped to the door and opened it. Some women were running by. She followed them in a rapid walk down the hall. The elevator stood at the landing. A crowd of frightened women attempted to push into it. Eva saw at once that the cage would not hold them all. Two, more sane, turned to the stairway, calling to the others to follow. But most of the others, in their panic, still

tried to crowd into the cage. The elevator boy fought them back, finally got the door closed, and threw the lever. The cage dropped from view, followed almost instantly by the second cage, loaded dangerously full, which dropped by from the upper floor. Three muffled detonations sounded ominously in quick succession from the foundation of the pile. The vast frame of the hotel trembled slightly. Screams burst from the dozen women at the elevator landing. Two began wildly wringing their hands. A third, perfectly white and speechless, kept pressing the elevator button. As Eva approached, the stairway seemed quite clear and open. Only in one corner of the court, a thin, bluish haze of smoke was steadily ascending. The haze was already spreading lightly in this upper corridor. The first glance reassured Eva. Some of the women started down the stairway. Others followed pell-mell, exclaiming. One had to run back and catch the arm of the woman who was pressing the elevator button. Thus compelled, she turned away docilely, bursting into tears, quite bereft of sense. The women disappeared.

All the long stretches of corridor on that floor were empty. On every hand the doors of hastily deserted rooms stood open, as though the hotel had been sacked. Below, the human clamor died down as swiftly as it had arisen. Eva felt herself alone with that bluish, ascending smoke. The deserted hotel seemed to make a vast, empty space about her, putting all the rest of the world infinitely far off. And in a dark, confused way, this

immense isolation, as though the tragic muse dwelt in it, gave to her mind a bloody presentiment, a huge and sombre image of ending all, fittingly, in an annihilating wrath of fire; her love and sorrow alike devoured in the final element; her very bones incinerated and scattered as dust. The impress of this upon her imagination imparted a shock to the very centre of her mind, and she then felt the first rush of fear. At the same time, like the shifting of a scene, the bluish haze of smoke in the court gave place to a thick, deadly black column, which came up more swiftly in an expanding pillar; and down there somewhere she plainly heard the muffled roar of fire. Instantly the light began to thicken under the heavier pall. She ran back to her room for the precious little roll of bank-notes in the writing-desk, — something which to her was not money, but the very means of life.

In her apartment there was quite a different air. The open window looked out on the broad, sunny expanse of gravel roof. The atmosphere was free from smoke. Here, instantly, the commonplace world appeared. The clatter of arriving fire engines and the shouts of the firemen arose from the street. At once the alarm in her mind subsided. She had only to climb out of the window. She felt a little ashamed of her touch of panic. While the commotion in her nerves died down, she could even smile a little over it. She got the money, took her hat in her hand, and sat down near the open window to get her breath. The roof, the hotel itself, the sunshine, the rustling treetops, seemed

very safe and enduring. As she got her breath, she considered whether to try the smoky stairway or to climb out of the window. Probably by this time it would be difficult getting out below. At any rate, she could wait a little and then see how it looked. The window was sure enough. As she sat there, the tremor of her nerves subsiding, she was more calm than she had been that day. Even the resting of her tired limbs now conduced to peace. Her mind was occupied by the fire; but her sense of capability began inscrutably to flow back to her, as though she had already tried her hand at life and found it competent. How simple it was — this thing of climbing out of the window. Or simple enough, for that matter, to run downstairs, if the women would keep their heads. Of course, the children —

A thought flashed in her brain. She turned her head as though some one had called her, her lips apart, her eyes startled. Then she smiled a little at the fancy. Certainly it was absurd. Everybody was out with all that hubbub and plenty of time — But again that thought flashed in her brain; again she felt as though some one had called her. How often had she known Mrs. Hollingshead to be away and the careless maid to lock the boy in. She saw Theodore, with his curls and eager dark eyes, with his childish hands. She knew, then, that she was called.

She went to the door and opened it. A body of smoke rolled in, sucked toward the open window. She felt its harsh sting in her throat and eyes.

The interior of the hotel was a huge chimney, enveloped in a thick brownish cloud, fold upon fold of which gently stirred, softly stole this way and that, as though moving with a power of its own. A long black streamer, unrolled from the smoky inferno of the court, drew itself swiftly and noiselessly along the top of the opposite corridor, giving off as it went little feathery sprays of the darker substance into the brown haze.

Eva tried to think of various safeguards against suffocation by smoke that she had heard of, — something about sponges and wet cloths wrapped about the head. But there was no time. She shut the door behind her and made her way toward the court, which was now a crater-like well of smoke. No fire was visible, — only the thickening, noiseless, gently stirring, deadly pall, spreading everywhere. She began coughing at once. In a moment water ran from her dim eyes, which smarted as though they were on fire. Instinctively she put her hand over her mouth. She could not run because of the difficulty of breathing. Already there was a sense of suffocation in her lungs. Her nerves tightened at the intimate touch of danger, at the hand laid upon her by this near agency of death. The smoke was thicker at the court. She found the banister with her hand, and stumbled down the stairs with shut eyes. Before she got across the corridor below, a great rushing and humming began in her brain. Her coughing was only a little spasmodic bark, which, however, racked her lungs painfully. She reached the door to the Hollingshead apart-

ment. It was locked. She felt her way along to the next door that opened to Mrs. Hollingshead's room, and found the knob. That, too, was locked. She felt a kind of furious terror, in which her failing strength seemed to come back to her. Everything warned her that the time was short, — and this stupid, impervious, locked door! She seized the knob and shook it furiously. She beat against the stout oak panels. She put her face close to the door and managed to cry, "Theodore! Theodore!"

And at once the child's voice, close on the other side of the door, piped: "That you, Aunt Eva? Take me out! Take me away!" From the tone of the voice she knew that he had been weeping.

She gathered herself desperately and called: "Is the key there?"

"No, Nellie took it," came the child's voice. "What 's all the noise for. It 's getting all smoky in here."

She perceived that her presence comforted and quieted him.

"It 's all right, dear. Wait," she articulated hoarsely.

She had been spending too much effort. The rushing in her ears became a roar, which seemed to knead her brain. Her breath was only a gasp to the base of her throat. Even as she clutched the knob to support herself, looking wildly about for a weapon with which to force the stout door, she felt her eyelids becoming heavy as lead; she was sensible of an obliterating stupor hanging over her, seeking to extinguish her; but all the time, far

within those increasing folds of insensibility, her will was bright and clear.

She stumbled out to the wide hall before the elevator landing and laid hold of a large upholstered chair. With the effort to move it, the muscles of her body seemed suddenly turned to water. Her knees gave way. She fell half across the chair. This failure of her body struck into that deep, undimmed place where her will shone with the sharpest fear she had ever known. In this failure of her good strong limbs she seemed to feel herself bodily clutched in by death. At the same time she was aware of a wide, red licking of flame bursting out somewhere through the smoke, down in the court. Abruptly, as though that searching arrow of fear had touched a new spring, she experienced an instant of tense, impassioned calm, in which she reached beyond humanity, beyond life. It was not an invocation, not a prayer. It was a tremendous instant, in which she summed herself all up and offered herself to God for his help as though she had a birthright to it.

She got to her feet and began dragging the chair toward the door. Her brain was a mere lump, a slow, clumsy machine of a single motion. Dragging the chair to the door, she stepped to the seat, then to the arm; then, dully clenching her teeth and steadying herself as best she could against the surface of the door, she climbed to the broad upholstered back of the chair. With several blows of her fist she broke the glass in the transom. Her starved lungs took in long breaths of the clearer

air of the room. Reaching in, she unfastened the catch and pushed the transom open. The space admitted her head and shoulders. Little Theodore was standing in the middle of the room, where he had run to dodge the pieces of glass when Eva had broken the transom. There was not much smoke inside, though it began trailing in now through the open transom.

Little Theodore, wondering, frightened, but comforted by Eva's presence and obedient, dragged up the chairs as she directed, and finally built a pile on which he mounted until she could seize his wrists and pull him up. The slight, agile child easily wriggled through the transom, and he and Eva slid and rolled together to the floor. The child sprang up laughing, and began to cough. "My, how smoky!" he exclaimed, in a kind of terrified glee.

The smoke, however, seemed to be lightening. There were the red lickings of flame at the bottom of the court, and the fiery breath came up to them on the stairs; but the smoke was less. Before they reached the upper floor, they heard the shouts of the firemen breaking into the court, and the splash of water. They reached the apartment and entered. By the open window, in the fresh air, Eva's lungs began to expand and the deadly obsession to lift from her brain. Presently she felt steady enough to get a drink of water. Theodore, too, was thirsty. Eva gave him the cup, and watched him as he clasped it in his baby-like hands, holding it eagerly to his lips, drinking

greedily, — a midget man, a softer and sweeter imitation of humanity in title, so helpless and so precious. They had said scarcely a word. Eva had not the strength, and Theodore was vaguely overawed.

When they returned to the window, the boy climbed to her lap. "How did you come to be alone, Theodore?" she asked. It was as she supposed. The maid had gone away and locked him in. He nervously lisped his recollection of the alarm, the knocking on the door, the shouting and running, which filled him with fear so that he hid behind a chair, crying to himself without knowing why. He cuddled closer to her in the recollection, burrowing his head against her breast.

"I guess if you had n't come, I 'd been all smoked to death!" he concluded, with infantile resentment.

She folded him closer in her arms with a kind of immense reverence. She thought, with a great exultation, "This, at least, I did!" The boy, understanding nothing but her love and protection, got his arm around her neck and kissed her cheek. At the touch of his soft, moist little lips, a new quality entered into her love of him. The mother suddenly saw him as an image of her child that was to be. She felt an indescribable melting, an immense, joyous surrender, which again seemed to transport her beyond life. It all came to her mind in a great, high clearness, — the effort she had made, her nearness to death, how her love had been answered. She was no longer afraid of any-

thing that might be before her. It seemed impossible to be afraid. Her love had sufficed for Theodore. It would suffice for her own child. That thought intoxicated her with joy. She wished only to do more, to give more, to love more. Nothing else mattered. In her joy there was a sense of holiness. The broad sunshine outside over the gravel roof seemed to speak to her spirit. At once she wished to get away, to leave the hotel, as though her going down and out were a symbol of her readiness to meet the world. She went to the door and looked out. The corridors had been steadily clearing of smoke. She heard the splash of water and the shouts of the firemen below. She took Theodore by the hand. They left the apartment.

The stairway was clear enough. As they descended through the deserted body of the hotel, the voices of the firemen working on the first floor and the steady swish and rush of water became more distinct. Evidently the fire was rapidly subsiding.

They came to the ground floor. A score of strange figures, enveloped in long rubber coats, topped by huge rubber helmets, moved in the court. Two long lines of hose were laid on the tile floor to the Michigan Avenue entrance, and the floor ran with water. No one noticed the woman and child. Eva lifted Theodore, holding him like a sack under her arm, gathered her skirts, and started over the wet floor to the Michigan Avenue entrance, beyond which she could see a strip of flagging, the asphalt of the street, and the walk on the other side, all still and empty in the

sunshine as though the street were quite deserted. Two firemen, hurrying in, stared at her in surprise, but said nothing. She went on to the door.

A rope had been stretched across the avenue a little above the hotel. A line of policemen stood guard over it. A great crowd of people, intent, watching, silent, pressed up to the rope, choking the avenue from wall to wall, stretching back in an unbroken mass halfway up the block. A fire engine, now shut off, stood close by the curb at the corner of Twenty-Sixth Place. The air hummed with the swift rattle and stroke of other engines plying on the south of the hotel. A squad of policemen kept the people back on this side; another blue-coated line was drawn up across Twenty-Sixth Place. But down Twenty-Sixth Place to the east, and in Michigan Avenue to the south, the crowd pressed, intent, watching, silent. The windows up and down the avenue were full of heads, craning out, intent, watching. Boys and men clustered on the nearest lamp-posts. It gave an extraordinary effect of the mob, numberless, packed, intent, watching as though it slowly devoured the scene with its myriad cold, hungry eyes.

Eva caught all this in a glance. Then, at once, she was aware of a focal point, a drama, there in the cleared arena before the hotel, — which was a sort of stage, with this great, spreading mob for an audience.

On the broad flagging toward the corner, a little aside from the fire engine, four brawny policemen held a captive, and the captive was Philip. He

was hatless and disordered. His vest had been ripped open in the struggle, his necktie pulled awry, one end of his collar unfastened. There was a bloody smear over his cheek where he had been struck. The policemen held him hard. The eight mighty hands were upon him, gripping his arms and shoulders. He had been pounded and overwhelmed, but he still struggled mechanically, trying to pull first one arm and then the other from the brawny grasp which pressed into the flesh, exerting all his muscles to liberate first one wrist, then the other, like a passionate child that cannot give up even when resistance is quite useless. His face was drawn and distorted.

He had driven up, to find the hotel on fire, surrounded by people, guarded by policemen. The sight had turned him mad. To his impassioned, overwrought mind, it seemed that Eva must still be up there, in danger, perishing. He had burst through the crowd. He had fought furiously with the policemen, unable to explain anything, unable to listen to anything, only seeing her all the time in mortal danger, perishing before his eyes. He had been beaten and overwhelmed. He kept trying uselessly to free his arms, no longer knowing where he was or what was happening, everything before his eyes like an unsubstantial dream, his flooded mind still full of the immense, blind, inarticulate passion to fight his way through to her, sobbing witlessly over his helplessness like a constrained child.

A deep, elemental emotion of pity infected those

who could see Philip's drawn, working face and the tears dropping from his eyes. His height and breadth, his heroic size, his great bodily strength which made the brawny policemen hold him hard, his ineffectual, mechanical efforts to free himself, his choked sobs as he stood bare-headed and disordered in the eyes of that multitude, of which he was only vaguely aware, made him seem like a big, whipped child. The exposure of his foolish struggle and his punishment before that great crowd moved those who could see to a deep pity. It was like seeing one of the blind elementary instincts visibly at work. The policemen themselves felt it. One of them picked up Philip's hat and put it on his head, and began stroking his shoulder as one might try to quiet a frantic child.

"There, old man! There! You 're all right now," said the policeman soothingly.

At the sound of this voice Philip turned his drawn, working face toward the man, staring blindly at him as though he would ask the man to help him.

Eva, coming to the door, saw the hat put on the captive's head, — in an instant saw that it was Philip. Theodore slipped from her arms. She ran forward. When the policeman spoke and Philip looked around at him, she stood before them, her lips apart, speechless, her whole mind in her eyes.

The policemen saw her, and understood by an intelligence nimbler than the brain that this speechless, amazed woman claimed the big child who had fought so witlessly to enter the hotel.

"Phil!" she gasped.

He gave a wordless cry. The constraining hands relaxed their hold, imposing scarcely any restraint to the forward sweep of the arms with which he caught her against his breast. The passion still flooded his mind. He understood only that after some terrible obstacle, some dreadful restraint, he had found her safe. He stood up straight, holding her against his breast, tears running from his eyes.

The nearer crowd, which had been stricken with pity over the big man's useless struggle, was quick to catch the meaning of the drama and gave a sudden cheer. To the farther, spreading mob which had seen the woman emerge from the hotel carrying a child, that cheer interpreted the play. The cheer was taken up, augmented, rolled on, in an immense, human sound.

Philip scarcely heeded it. Rapt in his single deep emotion, it was only a noise to him. He did not understand its relation to himself. To Eva it brought a shock of self-consciousness. She suddenly perceived herself on a conspicuous stage, the single target of all the eyes of the huge audience. This abruptly elevated and objectized her drama, projecting her consciously upon a stage. The cheers made a living atmosphere about her, defining and vitalizing the drama. She began swiftly to feel it with a new emotion, — not only the man's despairing struggle to reach his beloved, who was in danger, but a kind of fateful restraint laid upon his strength, against which he could do nothing.

She saw Philip's helplessness, as though he were a big, distraught child on her hands.

"We must go, dear; come," she said hurriedly, in a low voice. He suffered her to slip from his tight embrace and to take his arm, turning around docilely in obedience to her touch, staring in a bewildered way at the wall of beings which confronted him. She took Theodore by the hand.

The policemen, understanding, softened by the spectacle of love, by the woman and the child, were quick to do their part. One went ahead. They made a way through the crowd, pushing and commanding, convoying the man, woman, and child as though they were persons of note. Scores of packed faces, touched by a sense of the drama, peered at Eva and Philip. A man reached out good-naturedly and caught one of Theodore's curls in a big forefinger. The boy pressed close to Eva's skirts, clinging to her hand. Her other hand held Philip's arm, guiding him. He went on docilely, glancing at the crowd, whose relations to the scene he now began to understand. Eva walked with downcast eyes. She was not in the least embarrassed. She felt a certain dignity. If she glanced up, she saw friendly curiosity in the eyes which her glance encountered. They made their way slowly through the crowd.

A jam of carts and vans drawn up in the street to watch the fire made a barricade at the further edge of the crowd. As soon as they passed this, they saw the fourth policeman waiting for them by the curb. He had summoned a carriage.

From the skirts of the crowd a startled figure appeared, — Nellie, the maid, perfectly white, with eyes in which an indescribable horror still lay. Her beau, the usher, stood mutely in the spot from which she ran toward Eva. The maid's appearance scarcely surprised Eva. It seemed to come naturally out of the rush and whirl of events. It did not occur to Eva to blame her then. It was all inscrutably a part of the drama. There was an exclamation; an instant's pointless colloquy. Theodore was handed over to the maid. Eva and Philip were by the carriage. Philip was incapable of taking direction. The idea of drawing back at that time did not occur to Eva. The cheers, the breath and eyes of the audience, the movement of events, seemed to have a power of their own. Without premeditation, simply because that objective came most readily to her mind, she gave the driver the street and number of the Tomb. She and Philip entered the carriage. The door closed upon them. They felt the motion of the vehicle along the street.

The tight box of the carriage abruptly shut out the crowd, the audience, made these two alone with each other. Insensibly to both of them the focusing of so many eyes upon them, the living will of the audience centred against them, had strained their nerves and infused them with the subtle excitement of the stage. This now swiftly passed, bringing them down to themselves. The drama of the hotel front swiftly stood away from them, leaving only an impress, a coloration in their minds, as

when one looks at the shrouding curtain after an exciting play. In that subsidence, in the abrupt shutting out of the crowd, each was projected with singular distinctness upon the consciousness of the other. To Philip's still confused thought it was almost as though he had now discovered her, as he had intended, in their apartment.

"I came to find you — to come back to you — not to go away — Sarah told me," he began, striving in his emotion to put it before her all at once. "I could n't get in at the hotel — they held me back — more men came up — you see, it 's that way — I can't do as I wish — I am held." Unable to speak connectedly, as though he would put it all before her at once, he doubled his strong hands and held them out in her sight.

Eva perceived him again, bound, beaten and disordered before the crowd, making his despairing, witless struggle, — the big, whipped child. Her heart swelled sharply, a flood of pity overwhelmed her. Tears dimmed her sight.

"They struck you, Phil," she said, in a shaking voice. "Your cheek is all bloody. Oh, my dear boy!" As though it had been little Theodore, her lip quivered, tears dripped from her eyes. She wiped his cheek with her handkerchief.

"It 's that way," said Philip, in his emotion. "I want to reach you. I want to be good to you. I don't want to be a devil to you. I did n't know anything about a child. I can't manage things. I can't come out where I want to. Things get in my way. If you 'd help me" — His voice died.

He gripped her hand. They stared at each other with trembling lips and dim eyes, like two children.

"But you don't help me, Philip," she said.

"I can't — don't you see?" he said. "I can't even help myself. Nobody but you can help me. I knew that from the first. You can make what you like of me. This abominable crime, — going off and leaving you with our child, — what would become of me after that? For it is our child, is n't it? Mine as well as yours? Don't you see how it 's all come to me — only I can't manage things as you can" —

The mere mention of the child elevated her heart in the midst of that immense pity, which seemed to include herself as well as him. Many things came back to her, — the great instant in the smoke when she had found a power outside herself to help her; the rescue of Theodore; the full power of her love, making fear impossible; the drama in front of the hotel, infused and informed by the breath and living will of the crowd which put a stamp upon it. That was Philip's effort, like her own to rescue Theodore, but it had failed until she came to complete it before the myriad eyes of the crowd. She went beyond herself. Again she felt that exalted wish to give more, to love more, that joy touched with holiness.

"If you can't help me, Eva," he stammered; "if you won't give me a chance" —

"Oh, my dear boy!" she said; "I 'd do anything for you."

He gripped her hand, staring at her, feeling her forgiveness.

The carriage rolled on. He held her hand hard, looking at her with humble, penitent eyes; feeling her forgiveness, but strangely afraid to put his arm about her, having a sense of her upon some height above him, smiling down at him, taking him into her love, her generosity, her firm will, her abundant courage.

Eva smiled at him; but a mere bodily reaction from the stress and strain of the day had come upon her. That new state of her corporeal being of which she had been aware of late was making itself doubly felt.

They left the carriage in front of the Tomb. Philip walked beside her, humble, penitent. She paused, leaned against him, whispered in his ear: —

"I feel dizzy, dear; help me up the steps."

His heart uplifted with pride. He stooped. She said, "Oh, no!" quickly; then suffered it. He took her up bodily in his arms and ascended the steps. He felt a sudden joy, a sudden gratitude, for the strength of the big limbs which enabled him to do it so lightly. He would have been proud to hold her thus before the world.

Returning from Nebraska, Eva sat next the window of the Pullman car, looking out as the spreading skirts of the city came into view. Philip bent forward to look with her. On the broad, flat, prairie stretches the grass still held its green; but

the trees were already putting on the reddened gold of October. It happened to remind Eva of the return from that little journey to Wisconsin. Nothing important had occurred there, — only a little formality before a young clergyman who spoke through his nose, and a little fee. Yet it seemed to make a very large point in their lives.

The scene grew more crowded. Long rows of flat buildings marched by; huge bulks of factories and warehouses multiplied. Gigantic chimneys arose, pouring clouds to the endless pall which hung over the town. They felt themselves again on that wide plain, grown thick with dwellings, teeming with busy life, under its smoke. Over there, somewhere, was Boarding-House Row and the Tomb.

"It seems as hard at work as ever," said Philip. A joke shone in his brown eyes. "I suppose you 'll wish to look up a job now, to help the family through the winter."

She looked around, laughing. "Thank you, but I 've got my job," she said; and in a moment, abruptly: "Phil, I think we better take the flat for this winter, don't you?" She went on as he was about to protest: "The house is nicer, of course, but really it will be so much more expensive."

"Oh, a little more," he replied, as though that did not matter. "But" — his glance touched the fuller lines of her figure — "you 'd be better off alone — not in a flat."

"But that won't matter this winter. I can't be

out of the house much any way. I 'll tell you " — She looked up eagerly. " There 'll be a good deal of expense this winter, the best we can do, and I 'd like to have the expenses just as little as possible; and then in the spring, by May, say," — he saw the deep shining in her eyes, and he understood her thought that before May there would be a new world, — " then I 'd like as nice a house as we can afford. I 'd rather have the money that we can save in a flat this winter, to use then. Seems to me, some way, we ought to do it, like kind of a beginning, you know. Because, after this, there 'll always be somebody else to be thought of before ourselves."

Philip looked at her, the joke in his eyes. Then he laughed outright. " Well, I can see my finish," he said.

She laughed with him, as though the joke might as well stand.

When they came up through the station, he started toward a cab.

" We can just as well take the street cars," she suggested prudently.

" No ! no ! " he protested, with some heat, even with a touch of alarm. " I won't have you riding in street cars ! "

She looked up at him and laughed over the precious joke of her dearness to him. She stepped off toward the line of cabs along the edge of the broad flagging. Philip's glance enveloped her. She had the look of vigorous health, but in spite of the long box coat she wore, the fuller lines of

her figure were apparent. She had never seemed so precious as now, in the beauty and dignity of this promise of maternity.

He paused a moment on the broad, thronged flagging, with a rare and inexplicable satisfaction. Across the muddy street there was a dirty row of cheap saloons and lodging-houses. Smoke thickened the air. The grime and clamor of the unkempt city were everywhere. But Philip, loitering on the flagging an instant and looking out, felt a singular assurance, a singular wholeness, as though he had found himself at last.

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